



The potential to create new community woodlands through partnership working between communities and land owners.

A report for the Community Woodlands Association

September 2014



Community  
Woodlands  
Association

## *A proposal to create new community woodlands through partnership working between communities and land owners.*

### **Introduction**

The Community Woodlands Association was founded in 2003 and works to promote and facilitate the development of community woodlands<sup>1</sup>. This makes CWA ideally placed to support the development of the woodland creation proposal addressed by this study.

*“Woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats...will support jobs, attract visitors, provide recreational opportunities and an environment in which education for all ages can thrive.”*

*--- Fife Council<sup>2</sup>*

Woodlands are an important environmental, social and economic resource for Scotland's communities, both urban and rural<sup>3</sup>. The Scottish Government, in the Land Use Strategy of 2011, supports increased involvement of those closest to the land (e.g. land managers, communities, social enterprises) when it comes to decision making in local areas. To this end, the establishment of community woodlands by and for communities can improve the connection both with the land and with the people in their local area.<sup>4</sup>

Woodlands in Scotland bring a diverse range of benefits to communities. Community involvement can begin through recreation and access which then lead to improvements in wellbeing through increasing opportunities for social interaction and also for education and improving physical health through more time spent outdoors.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> CWA, 2014

<sup>2</sup> 2013: 5

<sup>3</sup> WEAG, 2012

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence et al, 2009; WEAG 2012

*All images in this report are available at [www.communitywoods.org](http://www.communitywoods.org)*

## **Background to the proposal**

This proposal was inspired by recommendation 22 in the report published by the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group in 2012.

*“The Scottish Government should help communities become involved in woodland creation. It should:*

- \* Set up a scheme to lease land for the purposes of creating community woodlands;*
- \* Continue to support and promote schemes such as the National Forest Land Scheme,*
- \* Encourage communities who become involved in woodland management through the National Forest Land scheme to consider additional woodland creation in the local area.”<sup>1</sup>*

The report also sets out the ways that this can be achieved:

*“We need to open up woodland creation opportunities much more widely to communities; increasing the degree to which communities are informed about, and potentially involved in, woodland creation and management close to them; and reducing the barriers that communities face if they want to create woodland.”<sup>6</sup>*

*“Schemes such as LEADER already exist to help build community capacity, and we suggest that woodland expansion could be achieved through encouraging existing community structures (such as Development Trusts, Community Councils, Village Halls, etc) to enter agreements with neighbouring owners of land to establish community woodlands on mutually beneficial terms.”<sup>7</sup>*



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<sup>5</sup> FCS, 2006; Lawrence et al, 2009; Tidey & Pollard, 2010

<sup>6</sup> ibid: 78

<sup>7</sup> ibid

For the purposes of this report, community woodland is one “partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with another organisation, such as Forestry Commission Scotland.”<sup>8</sup>

This definition encompasses community woodlands that are diverse in size, structure and focus<sup>9</sup>. CWA is proposing the creation of new community woodlands that fit the following criteria:

\* ***Small (0.5-5ha)***

This will enable communities to more easily manage woodland to meet multiple objectives<sup>10</sup>.

\* ***On under-used land adjacent to settlements***

This follows a recommendation in the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group report that small scale planting be away from prime agricultural land, with potential to enhance the environment close to settlements<sup>11</sup>.

\* ***Based on partnership working***

Partnership working, with a variety of organisations and individuals, can be valuable for community development, bringing together a range of expertise at different governance levels<sup>12</sup>.

Aside from these criteria, each woodland created as part of this proposal would be planned to meet the needs and aspirations both of communities and land owners, taking the local context into account<sup>13</sup>. This is important to ensure that sustainable management agreements are reached<sup>14</sup>.

*The aim of this study is to gauge support for this proposal by interviewing community groups, as well as land owners and managers, local authorities and third sector organisations.*

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<sup>8</sup> CWA, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>10</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>11</sup> WEAG, 2012

<sup>12</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence et al, 2009

<sup>14</sup> Calvert, 2009; Lawrence & Molteno, 2012

## Research Process

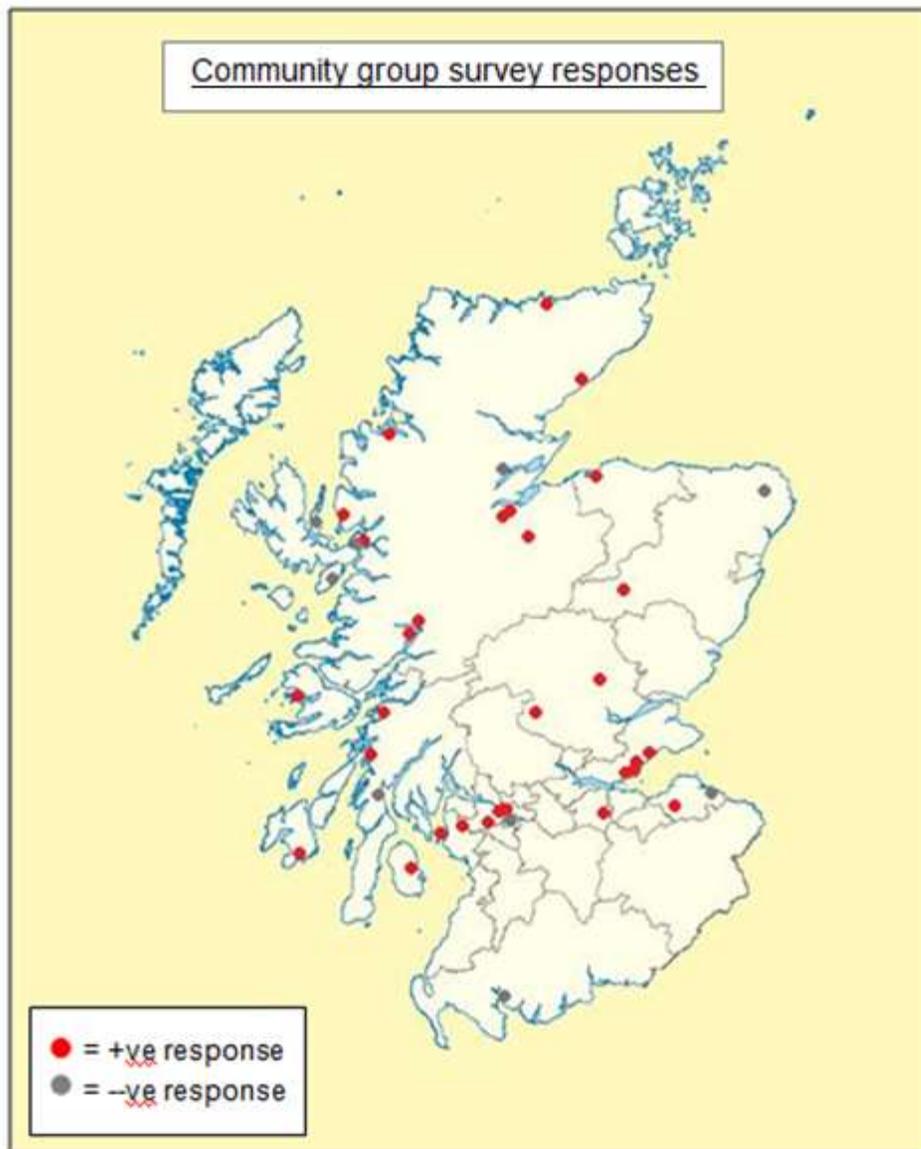
The first stage involved contacting community groups via email with a link to an online survey which asked the following key questions:

- \* Does your settlement have access to woodland?
- \* Do you think your area would benefit from access to woodland?
- \* Do you think your group would be interested in helping establish new woodland?

A total of 307 groups were contacted through the following networks:

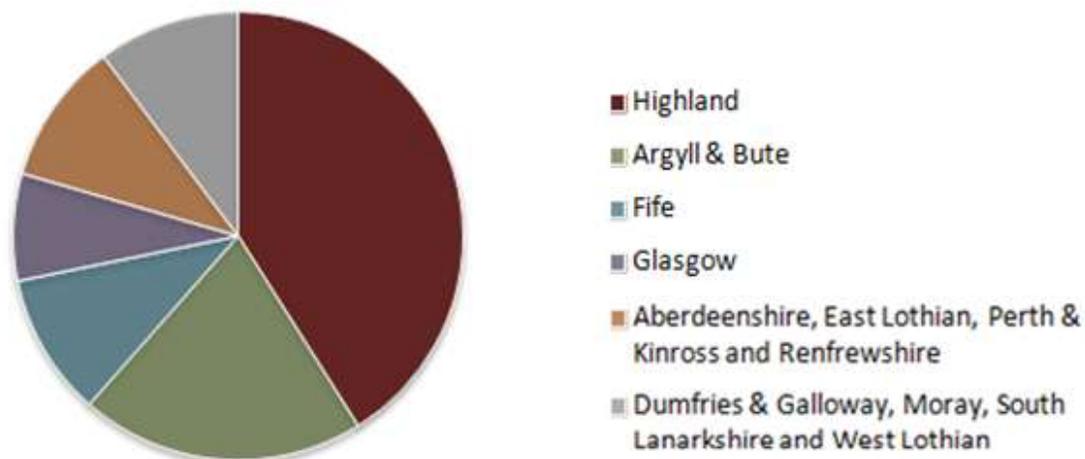
- Community Woodlands Association members
- Development Trust Association website

In addition, the survey link was sent out via the SCVO Village Halls Network newsletter.



43 groups responded to the questionnaire, leading to 35 positive responses. These groups were then invited to do a telephone interview to gain more specific and in depth information about their local circumstances, resulting in 14 interviews.

### Survey responses by Local Authority area



Following this private landowners were contacted via Scottish Land & Estates through their newsletter and East Neuk Estates directly by email.

The responses here were more limited, and 3 interviews were conducted with private land owners and managers. The views of private land owners are therefore under-represented in this study and there remains a need for further research in this area. Unfortunately time constraints meant that more persistent telephone follow ups were not undertaken, and this may need to be taken up at a future date if this project goes forward.

From these initial results across Scotland, Fife was chosen as a focus area as there were a number of positive responses from both community groups and a landowners' network based in this area. In addition, Fife Council published a Forestry and Woodland Strategy in 2013 which indicates recent engagement with and discussion about the need for woodland in Fife. The following organisations were then contacted:

#### Interviews conducted

- Fife Council
- Fife Forestry & Woodland Strategy team
- Greenspace Scotland

#### Contact established but unable to arrange interview in the time available

- Central Scotland Green Network Trust

#### No response to initial email

- Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

## Desired outcomes for new community woodlands

Those interviewees from community groups expressed an interest in community woodlands that would deliver multiple benefits:

Crafts Wood-fuel  
Recreation Fruit  
Education Biodiversity

15

Where their communities already have access to woodlands (but not management responsibilities), interviewees raised a number of issues with maintenance and safe access:

*“We’ve got an older community that don’t get out and use these spaces...lots of it’s quite steep and...there’s lots of tree roots.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian<sup>16</sup>

*“The horrible conifer woodland that we’ve got at the minute [is] very dark and not that nice, and people basically use it as a dog toilet.”*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

Some expressed a desire to improve the existing woodland in addition to considering the possibility of creating new community woods. It is important to consider the potential of existing woodland as well as opportunities for planting new woodland, and these aims can be complementary<sup>17</sup>. Reasons for this included wanting to maximise the area of woodland available to the local community by making access to existing woodlands safer and easier, in partnership with land owners and managers:

*“At the moment to access the wood you need to walk 2 miles along a really winding fast road. We’ve managed to persuade one of the local farmers to put access in through the farmyard.”*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

These agreements facilitate access to woodland for recreational activities including dog walking and mountain biking, but do not enable any further community involvement in the management of the woodland. The creation of woodland specifically for the community would allow for a more diverse range of activities both recreational and educational.

<sup>15</sup> Word clouds were generated using the number of interviewees who mentioned each term.

<sup>16</sup> Individuals and community groups have been made anonymous in this report to ensure confidentiality.

<sup>17</sup> WEAG, 2012

*“Once we’ve got a piece of woodland that we can say we manage, then we can do more in terms of getting the community together to create bird boxes, put bird boxes up, and really have a community focus on the outdoors, and it’s a great way to get the community together.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

Community woodland can lead to community cohesion and inspire people to start up or become involved in more community based activities, social enterprises being an example of this<sup>18</sup>.

Several interviewees highlighted how community woodland would enhance educational opportunities, particularly for young people.

*“We’re quite good at getting other local groups, especially those with mental health issues or the group from the high school that have some learning issues...So it would fit in quite nicely with the outdoor learning and skills agenda.”*

--- Environmental Action Group, Fife

*“We do have a couple of areas where there’s native woodland but it’s not accessible from the village within easy walking distance. So it’s definitely something we would like to be able to provide and educate local young people about. Because it’s not something they’ve really had the chance to encounter.”*

--- Playing Fields Association, Argyll & Bute

This also raises the issue of safe access to woodland, and how location and closeness to settlements can impact communities’ use of woodland.

*“There’s an open field behind the village hall... it’s somewhere that they [the school] can use for outdoor education and to have an outdoor classroom where they don’t have to take the children on a road.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

By planting community woodland that is easily and safely accessible, the local environment can be improved to become a resource for the community.

*“An adjacent area of forest, quite a considerable area, is currently in the process of being felled to make way for a wind farm. We have quite a lot of birds in the community and some of those are here because of that forest...It would be nice to retain some of the trees and in particular native species rather than forestry plantation types.”*

--- Environmental Action Group, Highlands

*“There’s a lot of people in this area and you’ve got this juxtaposition of population and woodland which is not there, it’s a former mining area so it’s quite bare. It’s quite an exciting concept.”*

--- Environmental Action Group, Fife

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<sup>18</sup> Lawrence et al, 2009; WEAG, 2012

Vacant and derelict land in urban areas has been targeted through initiatives such as Woodlands In and Around Towns, through Forestry Commission Scotland which aim to regenerate degraded industrial landscapes<sup>19</sup>.

*“The idea is that you’re restoring sites, not only just to green them up for ecological benefit, but to be productive, to benefit the community for more than just aesthetics...the benefit of aspen is that it brings major biodiversity benefits...it’s on various Local Authority biodiversity action plans...”*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

Interviewees talked about how community engagement can enrich the array of activities and opportunities available and help to bring people together through the management of the woodland as a community resource. This again illustrates how groups will have diverse objectives and interests which are key to designing a suitable management plan for community woodland<sup>20</sup>.

*“That’s one of the principal reasons for thinking this would be a really good idea: people working together to have something that they share and manage.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

*“There are a lot of folk with burners; it certainly is a growing phenomenon here. And whenever there’s a tree down it’s like flies, people flocking around, wielding their chainsaws! So that tells you there’s going to be a decent interest if you say ‘right, we’re going to plant some trees for wood fuel and coppicing, etc.’”*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

*“What we’d love to do is team it in with the rural skills department of the local school or the college and dry stone dyking classes or anything like that, they could learn and use that patch and we’d get a nice wall out of it - trying to think of ways to deliver multiple benefits.”*

--- Playing Fields Association, Argyll & Bute



*By crafting woodland to suit and adapt to the needs and aspirations of local communities it is possible to maximise both initial engagement and longer term sustainability<sup>20</sup>.*

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<sup>19</sup> FCS, 2011

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence & Molteno, 2012

## **Barriers to establishing new community woodland**

Most groups interviewed have specific areas of land in mind for woodland creation and know who the local land owners are. However, several barriers to establishing new community woodland were identified.

Soil quality   Grazing  
Funding   Land availability  
Land owners   Labour

The Woodland Expansion Advisory Group report indicates that community groups tend to take on well-established sites rather than planting new woodland, mainly because of the difficulties involved with finding suitable land<sup>21</sup>. This can be because woodland ties up the land longer term and is therefore likely to conflict with other land uses if it is not designed and managed appropriately<sup>22</sup>. These issues were also identified by interviewees, particularly in areas where land is either farmed intensively or set aside for development.

*“A lot of the farms are tenant farms [which]...might make it quite difficult to get anyone to agree to give up the land. And it’s all prime agricultural land as well.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

*“We’re in the commuting belt for Inverness and lots of landowners are sitting on land, assuming land prices will go up and they’ll be able to sell farmland for housing.”*

--- Community Trust, Highlands

*“There are a lot of housing development sites and earmarked sites for development around our community. So there would have to be some negotiation if we were looking for a site which is easily accessible from the main village. So it would be a case of trying to identify land apart from that identified for prime housing.”*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

*“Obviously council land is an easy one in terms of making contact and getting things going. It’s harder to identify private land owners, and many of them might be developers that are sitting on land and they’re only willing to look at any temporary short term measures because they might want to develop things down the line...and they see trees as a constraint.”*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

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<sup>21</sup> WEAG, 2012

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

However, it is possible that more adaptive arrangements for planting and managing small community woodlands could open up opportunities in places where larger blocks of woodland would be unwelcome. The type of 'small farm woodlands' in the WEAG report could help form part of a new community woodland model for more intensively farmed areas. These types of woodlands include shelter belts, floodplain woodland and forest gardens<sup>23</sup>. Interviewees talked about similar opportunities to find alternative ways of engaging with land owners.

*"It just occurs to me, quite a few years ago there was a guy who had an extended garden which he wanted to get the community in and create a community orchard...If there are people for example with big gardens that they're not using, that might be an opportunity. Half a hectare's pretty small for a wood."*

--- Community Trust, Highlands

*"We have a good relationship with the farmer and we've planted this 300 metre fruit bearing hedgerow down his field boundary on his side. We're talking more corridors and cordons rather than taking over whole fields."*

--- Environmental Action Group, Fife

*"The developer has planted trees, nothing very exciting, just a screening...It's not managed, it's not doing anything at the minute. I don't know what they've actually planted there, but if it could be productive that would be really nice. We've got links to their land agents, so that's a possibility."*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

*"I can think of instances elsewhere where land was bought for roundabout or road schemes and not all of it was used. And the owners, whether it's the Council or a utility company, don't really know how to give it back and so it tends to be abandoned. I think those areas might be usefully targeted by community groups to take them on and to manage them."*

*Utility companies might be easier...they want to be seen to be supporting community projects whereas a private landowner normally needs more of a direct and personal, tangible incentive."*

--- Land Manager, Na h-Eileanan Siar

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<sup>23</sup> WEAG, 2012

Another issue is that it may be difficult to initiate and maintain contact with land owners, particularly with those that are absentee. Several interviewees were uncertain about how to get in touch with land owners and managers.

Q: Who manages the woodland?

*"It's just a piece of woodland by the village, and everybody's allowed to use it but nobody knows!"*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

*We've spoken to the owners but they're difficult to get hold of, they're absentee. It's very difficult to maintain communication lines...They're a bit nervous about a group coming in and out because they're trying to sell the idea of a development there.*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

*"When we were thinking more about an orchard, there was a bit of land we found on the outskirts of the village by the railway line but we were unable to find out who actually owned that. We went to Network Rail and all that kind of thing, but we never actually established who it was."*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

*"How we then identify land – do we just put an advert up and say 'land wanted'? Or do we leaflet local farms? How do we do that? Do we go through the local NFU rep?"*

*Maybe we have to be proactive and say 'right, I like that bit of field there' and then find who that farmer is, knock on their door and say 'how about it?' But what are the chances?"*

*Up to now we've really been knocking on doors saying 'have you got any land for a tree nursery?' because that's our main priority at the moment. We're talking half an acre and we're struggling to even get that."*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

There's a lack of engagement identified here between communities and land owners/managers, with the responsibility for taking things forward being felt to be principally that of the community.

*"[The community] know where I am and what I'm prepared to do. I'm not seeking them out and saying 'please buy it.' So much depends on the individuals and who's involved..."*

--- Estate owner, Fife

Where communities and land owners do have a relationship, interviewees stressed the importance of maintaining clear communication and ensuring that the concerns of land owners are addressed.

*“ [The community]got...legal funding, and so none of the individuals were responsible for paying the bill...and I ended up with a legal bill...So if I did it again I would say they had to pay my legal expenses. It wasn't their fault, just that there wasn't any clear position of responsibility.”*

--- Estate owner, Fife

For many groups, leasing is a more viable option than purchasing land, which would require significant financial and organisational resources<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, a leasing arrangement allows for greater flexibility with regard to the level and type of responsibility taken by a community group<sup>25</sup>.

Forestry Commission Scotland recommends keeping agreements flexible enough to allow for future changes in circumstances and commitments that may impact all stakeholders. This will ensure that community involvement in managing the woodland is sustainable<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, the aims and involvement of all partners should be made clear at the outset, to avoid conflict and difficulties down the line<sup>27</sup>.

Partnership working has the potential to enhance and strengthen community development, but there are a number of issues to consider with regard to setting up partnership agreements<sup>28</sup>.

There are also different models for partnership agreements, with the focus and groups involved varying depending on local contexts. For example, in urban areas the social inclusion and youth education may be at the fore, with involvement from housing associations and council youth services. In other areas the focus may be on wood fuel for local residents or crafts and school education, engaging with local social enterprises and businesses<sup>29</sup>.

Although partnership agreements may not be viable in every context, the diversity of possible partnerships means that the model for community woodlands proposed here could vary considerably from place to place, despite the fact that they would all be small, close to settlements and based on partnerships.

*“A lot of the other woodlands are currently managed by a national park, and although they're quite keen for involvement by the local community that's only up to a certain level, because they want to maintain control of that rather than having another group coming on board.”*

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<sup>24</sup> Lawrence & Molteno, 2012

<sup>25</sup> ibid

<sup>26</sup> FCS, 2006

<sup>27</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>28</sup> Edwards et al in Calvert, 2009

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence et al, 2009

*So it's difficult to get into that ourselves...I think the challenge is to try and find a suitable management partnership structure that the land owner's comfortable with, we're comfortable with and the [managers] are comfortable with."*

--- Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

Input from land owners could vary from little or no involvement to continuing interest and engagement. There were several instances where land owners and managers have worked with and supported community groups.

*"[I'd be] probably happier to step back I suspect. The only thing I would want to ensure would be in relation to any boundary issues. The boundary of that land would impact on my remaining land, so I'd want to ensure that the boundaries were kept in good condition."*

--- Estate owner, Dumfries & Galloway

*"Some of the land owners around us have been very kind...An estate have lent our community facilities that cost thousands of pounds to hire normally. As with all these relationships there are things we'll agree on and things we won't but generally it's having the dialogue."*

--- Community Development Trust, West Lothian

*"We have a good relationship with the farmer and we've planted this 300 metre fruit bearing hedgerow down his field boundary on his side. We're talking more corridors and cordons rather than taking over whole fields."*

--- Environmental Action Group, Fife

However, these were with groups that are well established and have successful track records as well as a network of local contacts.

*"One of our Directors is a manager and does a lot of the legal work for a lot of the land owners around here so he can speak to them on a professional basis as well as personal."*

--- Community Development Trust, West Lothian

*"We've managed to persuade one of the local farmers to put access in through the farmyard. The access officer at the Council has been trying to get that agreed as a core path for years, but through our local contact we were able to persuade him to do that."*

*There are local land owners with whom we have got quite good relationships. We've got farmers on our Board so they're the people we use to have these conversations on our behalf."*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

A barrier highlighted in this study is concerned with the likelihood of there being local volunteers willing to spend time managing community woodland. This may be a particular issue in communities with limited resources in terms of capacity and skills<sup>30</sup>. Increasing pressure on these resources can result in community fatigue which in turn impacts their ability to sustainably manage the woodland<sup>31</sup>. Urban groups, in particular, may need extra assistance with community engagement if there have been few or no previous projects of this nature in the area<sup>31</sup>.

Additionally communities may not have adequate knowledge of essential aspects of community woodland governance, such as legislation, insurance and health and safety requirements<sup>31</sup>. Another potential issue is to do with the time and expertise involved in getting core funding, and the capacity within groups to apply for funding, to monitor progress and report back<sup>31</sup>. Therefore there may be a need for initial and ongoing training facilitated either by CWA or another organisation or group<sup>31</sup>.

The issues highlighted above indicate the need for flexible management plans, to allow community governance to evolve and adapt to changes in the community<sup>32</sup>.

*“Participation cannot be designed as a blueprint; instead participants co-evolve with a participatory process. The evolution is stronger, and the results more adaptive and sustainable, when it is combined with learning processes such as participatory monitoring and evaluation, networking and sharing experiences.”<sup>33</sup>*



Interviewees generally thought that it would be possible to recruit volunteers fairly easily, provided the expected commitments are made clear.

*“If we were planting woodland and having a group of people or even individuals who wanted to take on longer term management and maintenance of it, so long as it was done in discussion with us, we would be delighted for them to take it on. I think it would be more realistic for us to expect community participation in doing some of the practical work...where people, at the end of a weekend, can stand back and see something that they've achieved. I think [with] ongoing participation...it's much more difficult to maintain the volunteer momentum.”*

--- Land Manager, Na h-Eileanan Siar

<sup>30</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>31</sup> ibid

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence & Molteno, 2012

<sup>33</sup> ibid: 52

*“We’ve got good evidence that people will spend hours doing stuff, but we would have to absolutely clear what we were asking them to commit to.”*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

*“Generally they are, much like most small, quite isolated communities, quite up for getting out there and doing something so we’ve organised events, or fundraising events or summer fairs, all that kind of community based stuff. They’re very willing to come out and help.”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

*“We’ve done clean-ups and stuff like that and it does need a lot of community attention. Looking after the woodland that we’ve got takes quite a bit of work and I think that’s worth bearing in mind.”*

--- Community Development Trust, West Lothian

Where groups manage existing woodland, they may not have the time or resources to plant new woodland. However, there is the possibility that the extension of existing woodland could be incorporated under this proposal and that creation of new woodland as part of an existing management plan could complement and enrich the potential of the existing community woodland resource<sup>34</sup>.

From a land owner’s perspective, there may be the worry that an initial leasing agreement will lead to a community buy-out, in which case some land owners would prefer to sell the land at the start. Additionally, owners’ perceptions of woodland can affect their willingness to get involved with community woodland<sup>35</sup>.

*“A lot of the local land owners...perceive our intention as registering land under the Right to Buy legislation [and] being unnecessarily intrusive.”*

--- Community Land Association, Fife

*I’m quite happy to give away a couple of hectares, but the remaining wood I bought for commercial uses and it’s much bigger, so I think I would have just sold it to them at valuation.*

--- Estate owner, Fife

*“For a private landowner there would be a concern – ‘yes it’s great for me at the moment to enter into a partnership with the community, but will it at some later stage be compulsory purchased or taken away from me and given to the community? So am I going to lose it completely by entering into what is a community-spirited agreement and joint enterprise now?’”*

--- Land Manager, Na h-Eileanan Siar

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<sup>34</sup> WEAG, 2012

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

The small scale of the woodlands proposed here (0.5-5ha) make the arrangements potentially more flexible with regard to where they can be established and what form they might take. It also means that activities can be more focused and intensive<sup>36</sup>

*“The local community were endeavouring to fight a campaign against a wind farm and as part of my contribution to their campaign I gave them that woodland. That then generated a lot of press interest...they had great fun planting it and putting benches in, and it gave a focus to the community where previously there hadn’t been one.”*

--- Estate owner, Fife

*All of these are examples illustrate the need to adapt to local circumstances and use knowledge and contacts from within communities to find suitable land that can be made available for community use<sup>37</sup>.*



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<sup>36</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence et al, 2009

## **Support needed by communities**

*“The common link between community woodlands and community development or regeneration, in the UK at least, and the lack of any tradition of productive management, means that groups consistently express an acute need for advice, support and capacity building in financial and project management, community governance processes, fundraising and dealing with bureaucracy.”<sup>38</sup>*

Additionally, if new woodlands were to be created through this project, interviewees highlighted a number of different support needs, some of which could be delivered by CWA and some by local authorities or local voluntary councils<sup>39</sup>.

Planning    Facilitation  
Training    Networking  
Legal advice    Funding applications

Training and education was mentioned the most, particularly in the technical aspects of designing, planting and maintaining woodland.

*“Knowledge of what to expect from the woodland as it matures is something that we should be made aware of.”*

--- Community Development Association, West Lothian

*“We’ve thought about wood fuel, we’ve thought about access and recreation, we haven’t thought much beyond that and we don’t know what the pitfalls are...So we’d want help with a management plan and access agreements, and that kind of thing.”*

--- Local Development Trust, Perth & Kinross

Also mentioned was the importance of having a clear management plan and continued involvement from both the community and advisors. However, it is important that a balance be struck in decision making and planning<sup>40</sup>.

*“Our experience of the wood we have at the moment is that it was just done on an idea, a bunch of community people went in and planted trees, and that was about it really! They just grew and grew and there was no real plan or guidance on what would be expected within a certain amount of time.*

*When we came to thin the woodland we were given advice on how much wood you could cut, when you could cut it, etc. I think that’s really useful for a community woodland because without sustainable management it just deteriorates and becomes a bit of an eye sore for some people.”*

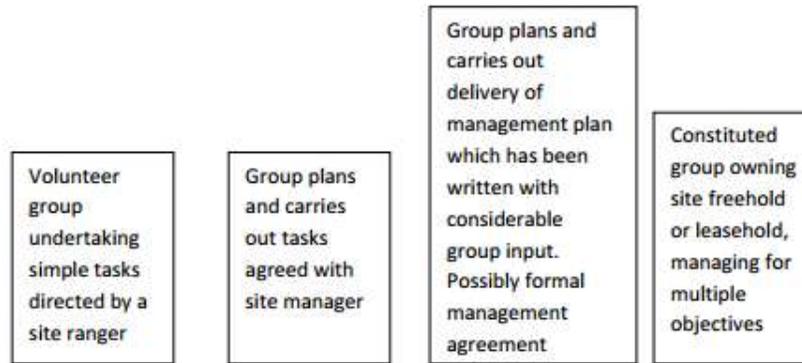
--- Community Development Trust, West Lothian

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence & Molteno, 2012: 51

<sup>39</sup> Tidey & Pollard, 2010

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence & Molteno, 2012



Increasing 'ownership'

➔

Attribute	Level			
	Low	Medium	High	High
Group skill level	Low	Medium	High	High
Autonomy	None	Low/medium	Medium high	High
Input to management plan	None (possibly consultation only)	Low	High	Fully responsible
Control over management objectives	None	Low	Medium/high	Fully responsible
Financial responsibility	None	Low	Medium	Complete
<b>Category</b>	<b>1. Guided assistance</b>	<b>2. Engaged</b>	<b>3. Active responsible</b>	<b>4. Capable ownership</b>

*Types & attributes of community woodland groups<sup>41</sup>*

The model of woodland creation proposed would entail planning and management to be undertaken by community groups, as in categories 3 and 4.

A potentially crucial role for CWA was assisting with facilitating between land owners and communities where this is needed.

*“It’s really important that we avoid legal disputes. If there is an external body acting as a broker in this and is also the funding mechanism, effectively, through grants, then I think that simplifies things enormously and means there’s less likely to be a relationship difficulty.”*

--- Community Trust, Highlands

<sup>41</sup> Tidey & Pollard, 2010: 55

*“We’ve got a lot of groups trying to push these things but there’s inertia - there’s obstacles, there’s challenges, trying to identify land and sites, engaging with private land owners. So I think that’s where CWA could pull all this together and say ‘right, let’s sit down and do a community consultation.’”*

---Social Enterprise, Renfrewshire

Groups have varying levels of experience, with case studies and visits being cited as being a possible way to inspire community groups and provide a concrete starting point for drawing up a management plan for new community woodland.

*“I think training would be the top thing, and chances to network and learn from others and visit other established woodlands.”*

--- Community Company, Highlands

Networking with other groups can be a valuable way to inspire and enthuse communities as well as disseminating knowledge of how to resolve problems through case studies and discussion<sup>42</sup>.

*“There’s plenty of people around here who are quite au fait with more horticultural tree management...managing our own orchards and that kind of thing, on a very small scale. But actually to have a community group trained with the appropriate skills [and] the confidence to do that, we’d need [training].”*

--- Community Association, East Lothian

*Due to the often disparate nature of community woodland groups across Scotland, providing networking opportunities and other forms of support may be challenging. This is where CWA or a paid staff member in the community could play a role in bringing groups together<sup>43</sup>.*

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<sup>42</sup> Calvert, 2009

<sup>43</sup> ibid

## **Discussion & Summary**

This study has examined the support for creating new community woodlands through partnership working. By drawing on interviews and survey results as well as previous studies some of the opportunities and barriers to this model of woodland creation have been discussed. The Woodland Expansion Advisory Group have recommended making woodland creation opportunities more achievable for communities by addressing some of the barriers that they face, and this study has attempted to highlight some of these potential barriers by illustrating the views of community groups and land owners/managers regarding community woodland creation.

It is clear that many of the community groups interviewed have specific pieces of land in mind for new woodland and have given some thought into this. This puts CWA in a good position to move forward, and support community groups to achieve their existing goals, rather than helping to create a new group, although this may become part of the project in the future. The main values of community woodland were described by community groups as helping to bring communities together with a range of recreational and creative activities, and also to educate young people. Safe access was also a priority, particularly for groups with a significant elderly population.

Barriers to creating community woodland were largely to do with finding suitable land and, tied in with this, opening productive communication with land owners was highlighted as a major difficulty. Issues ranging from absentee land owners to farmers' worries about tying up land for long periods mean that it can be difficult for community groups to know where to start, if they don't already know or have a relationship with local land owners. It may be that Local Authorities may be more usefully targeted, although here there is often the difficulty of finding land that has not been set aside for development. These difficulties highlight the need to be innovative in the planning of new woodland, and the small scale proposed here may be a distinct advantage when it comes to negotiating the use of parcels of underused land near settlements. The examples of successful partnership working from both community group and land owner perspectives are encouraging, and show what is possible when community groups take the initiative to open dialogue with land owners, or vice versa. Additionally, interviewees and previous studies highlight the importance of designing woodland in an intelligent way, that is, to use the space available to create a woodland that will provide multiple benefits and complement the existing surrounding land uses.

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