

**Community Woodlands Association
Knowledge Share Programme 2008 – 2010**



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Woodlands
Association**

Final Summary Report and Compilation of Feedback

The Knowledge Share Programme

The CWA Knowledge Share programme was an innovative series of training events designed specifically to deliver the necessary skills to manage community woodland for business, environmental conservation and the benefit of the wider public. 26 events were organised through the Programme, attracting a total of 601 participants.

Event	Location	Attendees
Conference 2008: Making Sustainable Places	Glenrothes, Fife	61
Planning & Carrying Out Woodland Thinnings	North West Mull	25
Log Building	Inverie, Knoydart	12
Woodland Management Planning	Falkland, Fife	17
Woodland Deer Management	Inverie, Knoydart	14
From Ideas to Action – Project Development Seminar	Dundee	18
Conference 2009: Returning to Roots	Drumnadrochit, Inverness-shire	117
Inspiring Volunteers Seminar	Alva Glen, Clackmannanshire	15
Glasgow Community Woodland Groups Networking Event	Glasgow	17
Woodland Gardens, Fairlie	Ardrossan, Ayrshire	21
Woodland Gardens, Bothwell	Bothwell, S Lanarkshire	19
Harvesting Thinnings and Processing Timber in Small Woodlands	Kirkhill, Inverness-shire	30
Green Woodworking and Pole Lathe Turning	Dunnottar Wood, Aberdeenshire	13
Coracle Making	Milton, Easter Ross	11
Woodland Groups and Arts Networking event	Milton, Easter Ross	16
Train the Trainer	Stirling	4
Train the Trainer	Dunblane	6
Developing Community Woodland Groups	Menstrie, Clackmannanshire	12
Moth & Butterfly Identification & Survey	Gearrchoille CW, Sutherland	9
Staging & Managing Theatre Events in woodlands	Achnaha CW, Morvern	18
Woodland Crofting Development	Dunbeag, Argyll	16
Developing Local Crafts & Foods / Enhancing Biodiversity	Strathcarron, Wester Ross	20
Woodland Management Planning	Castlemilk Stables, Cassiltoun	9
Charcoal Making	Kilmory Farm, Argyll	10
Huntly – Forres Networking & Demonstration	Moray - Aberdeenshire	24
CWA Conference - Making Woodlands Work	Callander, Stirlingshire	67

Detailed reports for individual events were prepared and are available on request.

Training Event Locations and Schedules

The ethos of the Knowledge Share programme is that all events are designed and organised to meet the needs and suit the requirements of participants, who are usually volunteer members of community woodland groups. This means scheduling events at convenient times, using venues that are accessible and welcoming, and ensuring that there is an appropriate balance of formal learning and informal networking opportunities.

Event venues ranged from the middle of the city to deep in the woods:



Wherever possible the event schedule included a mix of indoor and outdoor learning:



And provided a balance of formal sessions and opportunities for informal networking:



Event Topics

The Knowledge Share programme was based around meeting training needs identified by community woodland groups. There are c. 200 Community Woodland groups across Scotland, the vast majority being members of the CWA, either directly or through membership of Regional "Umbrellas", e.g. Borders Forest Trust and North Highland Forest Trust. They deliver a huge range of economic, environmental and social benefits, which also ensures that they have a wide spectrum of training needs, from practical woodland operations, management planning and biodiversity enhancement, to project development, encouraging volunteering and undertaking community consultation and engagement.

Practical topics covered ranged from mainstream forestry and timber milling:



...to ancient crafts... (coracle pictures © Ruth Macdougall):



...to arts and theatre as vehicles for community engagement:



Event Feedback

Participant feedback was collected post-event with a custom form provided to all event hosts as a template, host groups were then required to add event-specific details and circulate to all participants. For certain events the form was modified to gather additional feedback on particular elements of the event: site visits, individual speakers, etc .

This report compiles, summarises and analyses feedback for 22 of the 26 events. The two Train the Trainer events had their own specialised feedback forms, and at two other events the forms were not distributed. Nonetheless, a total of 330 forms were returned, representing 55% of the total number of participants. (NB: not all respondents answered all questions.)

Overall Event Quality

Do you feel that the event delivered your expectations?						
Yes		No		Partly		Total
308	94%	0	0%	18	6%	326

Would you recommend others to take part in such an event?					
Yes		No		Total	
281	100%	0	0%	281	

These two questions assessed participants' overall satisfaction with the event.

We are very proud of these results and regard them as demonstrating a very high satisfaction rating with the overall quality of event.

Participants who responded "No" or "Partly" were given the opportunity to explain why, although not all did so. Reasons given for events only partly delivering on expectations covered included:

"I would have liked more social enterprise and income generation emphasis"

"One representative couldn't attend the first day"

"I said partly met my expectations, which was uncharitable - my interest was in fruit growing this was a small detail, the site, the lifestyle, the crops were a revelation - what a brilliant site"

"Would have liked more on planting in the forest, mixing native edible plants with domestic plants in a permacultural system"

"Bowling green was too small for breakout groups"

"Would have liked to have seen more of the woods – a mini guided tour?"

It's unfortunate that we weren't able to meet everybody's expectations, but we were reassured that even the "negative" feedback received was actually fairly positive in tone.

General Feedback on Event Arrangements

	V Poor		Poor		Fair		Good		V Good		Total
Location	0	0%	2	1%	21	7%	86	27%	214	66%	323
Organisation	0	0%	0	0%	9	3%	78	24%	236	73%	323
Catering	3	1%	3	1%	16	5%	89	28%	211	66%	322
Facilities	0	0%	2	1%	24	7%	104	32%	192	60%	322

As previously noted, Knowledge Share events were held in a wide variety of locations, from purpose built conference centres, through to village halls and other community facilities. A number of events with a more practical theme used log buildings and outdoor venues: the community woodlands themselves.

In these circumstances it can be quite difficult to guarantee the highest possible standards for catering and other facilities, so we were very pleased with the generally very high ratings received from the feedback, with more than 90% of respondents marking Location, Organisation, Catering and Facilities as Good or Very Good.

Unfortunately one event received very poor marks for catering – somewhat ironically this was the “From Ideas to Action Project Development” event which was held at a professional conference centre, the West Park Centre Dundee, (all 3 Very Poor and all 3 Poor ratings for catering were generated by this event). A formal complaint was made to the Centre.

Benefits & Experience Derived from Attendance

Feedback was also sought from participants as to what they gained from attendance:

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

“What will you do with the experience / skills you have had from attendance?”

Responses were overwhelmingly positive; some comments were event-specific:

“Good knowledge of working with deer and woodland areas.”

“to understand the logic and process of thinning”

“Further understanding and confidence in the safe of use and care of woodworking tools.”

“The experience gained this week will be the basis for researching and evaluating any further projects that the group propose to undertake”

“Start to write a management plan”

whilst a number of participants responded:

“Good knowledge”, “Gaining skills” and “put skills to practical use”

Networking

The feedback form doesn't use the word networking, nor does it ask a question designed to elicit that response, yet “networking” was the most frequently mentioned benefit of attendance, and one of the major reasons why participants would recommend a CWA Knowledge Share event to others.

In addition to respondents who mentioned networking, several participants remarked on the *“Friendly atmosphere”* and *“enthusiasm and motivation”* derived from attendance. Others commended events as:

“A great way to meet likeminded people and share knowledge and experiences”
“You meet a lot of very nice and interesting people, willing to share information”

We regard this feedback as underlining the value of CWA delivering events specifically for the community woodland sector, designed and structured to meet the needs of the particular audience. Training and learning is a serious business, but our view is that all participants will learn more and better if they are relaxed, enjoying themselves, and feel that they are with likeminded friends and colleagues.

Train the Trainer

As previously noted, the 2 Train the Trainer events used a more detailed and event-specific feedback system, with 20 aspects of the course to be rated excellent/good/adequate/poor/very poor. Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive (50% excellent, 45% good, 5% fair). One general comment was particularly striking:

“I’m an old cynic, and have difficulty in making room for new information and techniques. Ian Hunt can teach old dogs new tricks! Thanks very much for 3 great and fulfilling days”

Future Events

There was considerable encouragement for CWA to seek funding to extend the Knowledge Share Programme to deliver more events.

New topics suggested included:

- Food from woodlands
- Coppicing for woodfuel & biodiversity
- Marketing woodland products
- Woodland craft enterprises
- Managing heritage sites in woodlands
- Woodland survey and woodfuel development
- Funding & project development workshop

Certain event topics, notably the very well received Train the Trainer courses and Woodland Management Planning could be repeated elsewhere for new audiences.

Acknowledgements

CWA would like to thank all member groups who hosted events, and all the participants who contributed to the events and made the programme such a success.

We would also like to thank the funders who contributed to the costs of hosting and attending the events: the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme, The Robertson Trust, The Hugh Fraser Foundation and the Community Land Unit of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.