



Community Woodlands in Central Scotland Networking Day

Friday 15th February 2019 10:00 am – 4 pm

@ Craig Inn Community Centre (*a.m.*) & Beechbrae (*p.m.*), Blackridge, West Lothian

AGENDA

- 10:00 Arrive @ Community Centre** - tea/coffee, refreshments.
- 10:20 Welcome/Introduction & the Community Woodlands Association**
- Chris Marsh (*Community Woodland Officer, CWA*) & Jon Hollingdale (*CEO, CWA*)
- 10.35 Central Scotland Green Network Trust – Support & Rain Gardens**
- Emilie Wadsworth (*Deputy Head of Strategic Development, CSGNT*)
- 10:50 Forestry Commission Scotland – Advice & Support**
- Sasha Laing (*Regulations & Development Manager, Central Scotland Conservancy, FCS*)
- 11:00 Craigmillar Castle Park**
- Ben McCallum (*Woodland Engagement Officer, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust*)
- 11.15 Doune Community Woodland Group**
- Tony Farrant (*Chair, Doune Community Woodland Gp*) & Rory McLeod (*Moray Estates*)
- 11.30 Dunbar Community Woodland Group**
- Isobel Knox (*Secretary, Dunbar Community Woodland Group*)
- 11.45 Barriers & Routes to Community Woodland establishment**
- Anna Lawrence (*Director, CWA and social forestry consultant*)
- 12:00 The Volunteer Management Cycle**
- Adrian Murtagh (*Head of Business Development, Volunteer Scotland*)
- 12:40 General Discussion & Feedback**
- 13.00 Lunch & Networking**
- 14:00 Beechbrae – Site Visit**
- Ally Graham & Beechbrae staff
- 16:00 Finish & Depart.**



In Attendance:

<i>Ally</i>	<i>Graham</i>	Beechbrae
<i>Sammy</i>	<i>Saunders</i>	Beechbrae
<i>Stuart</i>	<i>Whittaker</i>	Cassiltoun Housing Association
<i>Paul</i>	<i>Elliot</i>	Friend of Castlemilk Park (Cassiltoun)
<i>Peter</i>	<i>Mitchell</i>	Watston Forestry (Carron Valley Community Woodland)
<i>Mark</i>	<i>Smillie</i>	Central Scotland Green Network Trust
<i>Emilie</i>	<i>Wadsworth</i>	Central Scotland Green Network Trust
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>Plant</i>	Coastal Communities Network
<i>Jon</i>	<i>Hollingdale</i>	Community Woodlands Association
<i>Chris</i>	<i>Marsh</i>	Community Woodlands Association
<i>Ben</i>	<i>McCallum</i>	Craigmillar Woodland / Edin & Lothians Greenspace Trust
<i>Tony</i>	<i>Farrant</i>	Doune Community Woodland Group
<i>Rory</i>	<i>McLeod</i>	Moray Estates (Doune Community Woodland)
<i>Isobel</i>	<i>Knox</i>	Dunbar Community Woodland Group
<i>Jane</i>	<i>McArdle</i>	East Kilbride Community Trust / 'K' Woods
<i>Chloe</i>	<i>Rossi</i>	East Kilbride Community Trust / 'K' Woods
<i>Mary</i>	<i>Gejenska</i>	Environmental Arts
<i>Malcolm</i>	<i>Le Maistre</i>	Environmental Arts
<i>Paul</i>	<i>Cookson</i>	Green Aspirations
<i>Sasha</i>	<i>Laing</i>	Forestry Commission Scotland
<i>Fiona</i>	<i>Addison</i>	Shieldhill & California Community Council
<i>Maria</i>	<i>Montinaro</i>	Shieldhill & California Community Council
<i>Hammy</i>	<i>Hira</i>	Shieldhill & California resident
<i>Jane</i>	<i>Begg</i>	West Lothian Council – <i>woodland officer</i>
<i>Paul</i>	<i>Green</i>	West Lothian Council – <i>tree inspector</i>
<i>Anna</i>	<i>Lawrence</i>	Random Forest / Community Woodlands Association
<i>Adrian</i>	<i>Murtagh</i>	Volunteer Scotland
<i>Iwan</i>	<i>Thomas</i>	The VAT Run, South Queensferry
<i>Ian</i>	<i>Records</i>	Addiewell village, W Lothian
<i>Anne</i>	<i>Henderson</i>	Addiewell village, W Lothian

Apologies for non-attendance:

Cairnhill Woods Group, Callander Community Development Trust, Dalgety Bay Community Woodland Group, Friends of Queens Park Glasgow, Friends of Stonehouse Park, Under the Trees CIC.

Welcome/Introduction & the Community Woodlands Association

– Chris Marsh (*Community Woodland Officer, CWA*) & Jon Hollingdale (*CEO, CWA*)

Chris Marsh welcomed everyone to Blackridge and thanked all for coming. After a successful, inaugural networking event in East Kilbride in March last year, this event hoped to replicate a similar sense of sharing and learning amongst attendees: over a dozen individual woodland groups were represented today as well as some important support organisations so the opportunity to make some useful connections was available to all. He also thanked both Forestry Commission Scotland and the Central Scotland Green Network Trust for essential funding to make this event happen.



The basic format of the day was – in the morning – to give a number of established woodland groups a chance to explain their evolution, ambitions and experiences to date. Forestry Commission Scotland and the Central Scotland Green Network Trust had also been invited to talk about their support role, as too had Volunteer Scotland since discussion at the previous event had highlighted a common interest amongst attendees to have a more expansive discussion about volunteers and volunteering. In the afternoon, Ally Graham and Sammy Saunders from neighbouring Beechbrae were to lead a walk around their woodland/social enterprise site to show people what they do there. As there were a number of attendees from communities still at the very earliest stages of establishing woodland groups and/or taking on any woodland management responsibilities, Chris had also invited forestry researcher Anna Lawrence to talk about some recent work undertaken to identify successful routes and barriers to establishment that a range of community woodland groups from across the central belt commonly encountered.

For those unfamiliar with the work and role of the Community Woodlands Association, Chris gave a quick synopsis: the CWA is a membership organisation established in 2003 to support and promote community woodland involvement and management in Scotland. They cater to the needs of over 150 member groups over a wide range of support issues - from group establishment and governance, land acquisition/leasing/partnership arrangements and on to specific woodland management planning and operational delivery advice. The CWA also represents the sector at a national level in political lobbying and policy formulation. Members receive regular e-bulletins with funding and event updates, and quarterly e-newsletters with more in-depth group case studies and news. As well as training and networking events, the CWA also organises an annual conference which is consistently an inspiring forum for new ideas and sharing experiences. CWA has an email discussion group which allows members to post any queries and receive feedback/advice from across the entire membership. The CWA is managed by a voluntary Board of directors who typically meet every two months - either face-to-face or by teleconference. There is a conscious effort to have a good geographic spread in Board Directors to ensure good regional representation which then reflects a breadth of interests/concerns from member groups both urban and rural, large and small.

Jon Hollingdale then introduced himself to the meeting and publicised the fact that he was now in receipt of several dozen hand axes – donated to CWA via Woodland Trust Scotland. Any woodland groups who were interested in taking some e.g. for a volunteer group, should get in contact so that he could distribute them.

Finally Chris highlighted that the **Scottish Finest Woods Awards** competition was currently open for applications. This annual competition has been running for many years with the intention of recognising and rewarding examples of good practice in forestry across Scotland. Further information about SFWA, and an application forms for entry, is available online at www.sfwa.co.uk. Most relevant to today's meeting, there are two community woodland award categories (for Large & Small groups) specifically designed to recognise entrants that can demonstrate significant and sustained community input that are achieving exemplary woodland management. A prize of £1,000 is available in each category and the application procedure is not onerous. Assessment and short-listing of applications is carried out through April with SFWA panel members visiting shortlisted woodlands during April/May. The Award ceremony is held at the Royal Highland Show in Inverclyde in late June.

Find out more about CWA at www.communitywoods.org and www.facebook.com/Communitywoods.

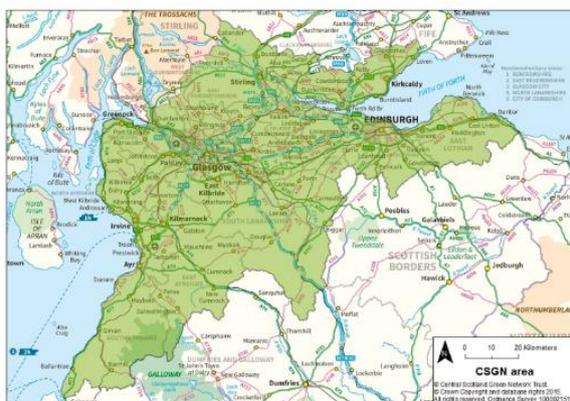
The CWA website has a range of support information including archived training and workshop event reports. The previous Central Scotland networking event report (East Kilbride, March 2018) can be found - along with reports from other previous CWA networking events - at <http://www.communitywoods.org/resources-details.php?id=16>.

Central Scotland Green Network Trust – Support & Rain Gardens

Emilie Wadsworth (*Deputy Head of Strategic Development, CSGNT*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/7LBcttyLmq0>

Emilie showed a map of the CSGN catchment area (below) and outlined the organisation's long-term vision of seeing Central Scotland transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people's lives are enriched by its environmental quality. The 2025 Delivery Plan has a number of component 'parts' or themes (derelict land, habitats, active travel, community activity etc) and CSGN's support is prioritised where population density, developmental 'pressure' and multiple social deprivation indicators provide strong evidence to warrant concerted input. As a rule, CSGN tend to work in partnership with other public sector organisations (FCS, SNH, NHS, local authorities etc) but also with local communities, businesses and developers. They have a number (4.5 fte) of Development officers, technical and administrative staff as well as 6 Project Delivery staff. There is also a CSGN Development Fund open annually to applicants (public- and third sector groups) who have project proposals that plan to meet as many priority themes as possible and deliver tangible improvements on the ground. It has historically been a highly competitive fund and always over-subscribed. Emilie encouraged any groups within the CSGN catchment to get in touch for advice and discussion of eligibility if they have proposals that appear likely to meet a number of their priority themes and that are otherwise ineligible for grant-aid normally provided by other sources (e.g. SNH, SRDP woodland grants etc).



Emilie then elaborated on a current project that CSGNT are actively supporting in collaboration with the Scottish Green Infrastructure Forum: 'Rain Gardens'. A raingarden is an area of planting – typically in an urban setting - designed to intercept and temporarily hold rainfall, then slowly releasing it to limit potential inundation of drainage systems that can lead to flooding. They can take many forms from ponds, swales and depressions in the ground, to planter boxes under disconnected downpipes, greens roofs and green walls. Increasingly, roadside dropped curbs with adjacent ornamental planting beds are being designed to achieve this function but also to contain pollution, increase biodiversity through use of native plant species and simply 'green' the built environment.

Emilie's presentation showed a variety of imaginative examples from across Britain and Europe where these principles have been accepted and implemented more widely to date. A complete river catchment project on the River Calder showed greening techniques being utilised at scale to alleviate significant flooding risk in Calderdale. Emilie is keen to encourage the uptake of more green roof and rain garden projects across the CSGN area and can provide support as well as a lot of useful links to any individuals or groups wishing to know more. (The presentation included a number of these links). There is also the potential to apply to SNH's Green Infrastructure Fund to help finance eligible projects.

You can find out more about the work of the CSGN at <http://www.csqnt.org.uk> and about rain gardens at www.sgif.org.uk or by contacting Emilie at emilie.wadsworth@csqnt.org.uk

Forestry Commission Scotland – Advice & Support

– Sasha Laing (*Regulations & Development Manager, Central Scotland Conservancy, FCS*)

This presentation is available online at https://youtu.be/Go_mWmUwffk

Sasha works for FCS's Central Scotland Conservancy which has a similar catchment to CSGN (although also including the Loch Lomond & Trossachs national park and excluding 4 of CSGN's 19 local authority areas). One of her key roles is speaking to communities about local woodlands: advising them on management options, potential eligibility for specific funding and directing them to sources of further support or delivery (e.g. CWA, local authority, Woodland Trust Scotland, private forestry/arboricultural management companies etc). Sasha's presentation was designed to give a more complete picture of the issues and regulations that community groups need to understand – and take into account - in order to make sensible and informed management decisions. Ultimately this starts with being clear about *What do you want to do with the wood?* and *Who owns the wood?* Knowing the latter is fundamental in making any meaningful progress. In contemplating management ambitions, Sasha can help groups consider possible options open for leasing, developing a management agreement with a third-party owner or even exploring opportunity for community acquisition in order take aspirations forward.



At the same time there can often be a broad range of opinions expressed in terms of community aspirations for use and development of local woodland. Ensuring objectives are adequately canvassed and determined is important as woodland management is a long term commitment. Agreeing - and being clear about - long term objectives is therefore critical in creating realistic woodland management plans as well as setting in place a sequence of practically achievable management operations. Funding for some aspects of management work is available to woodland owners through the Scottish Rural Development Programme and Sasha can help direct groups to relevant grant-aid. FCS also operates a separate Community Fund that groups can apply to for help in meeting the costs of specific social and recreational project work or capital costs to which the community group may want to commit. The total budget of this annual fund is modest and often over-subscribed so early contact with the Conservancy can ensure awareness of a group's intentions. They can advise accordingly as to the Fund's availability and a project's eligibility. For project costs under £5k up to 100% funding may be available. For projects from £5-20k up to 90% funding may be considered. For projects in excess of £20k then the maximum intervention rate is 75%. The CWA produce a monthly members' newsletter that also gives other sources of funding that might make suitable match funding.

Sasha finished by encouraging groups to get in touch with her or other Conservancy staff (details in presentation) if they are exploring projects that might fit the eligibility criteria of the Community Fund. There are no online forms so personal contact is fundamental to progressing any proposal.

Sasha can be contacted at Sasha.Laing@forestry.gov.scot. More info about FCS can be found at <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk> and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ForestryCommissionScotland>.

Craigmillar Castle Park

– Ben McCallum (*Woodland Engagement Officer, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/7p9a1ArfBAQ>

Craigmillar Castle Park is a 62 hectare 'natural heritage space' owned by Edinburgh City Council and comprises a mixture of old policy woods, younger turn-of-the-millennium plantings, extensive open grass parkland and path networks. The park is set against the backdrop of Craigmillar Castle – a large, ruined baronial structure owned and managed by Historic Scotland. The park is located between the suburbs of Inch and Castlemillar in the south-east of Edinburgh – both settlement areas comparatively high on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Prior to establishment of a partnership project between the council and the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) in 2006, levels of community engagement with the park had been low and there were significant problems with anti-social behaviour in and around the park.

Ben works as the Engagement Officer for the park and says the key to the successes achieved at the park are through engaging with a wide variety of community groups. They have walking groups to cater for a range of local residents including those with special needs, mental health issues or encountering social isolation. They have integrated the delivery of Paths for All leadership training with some of these groups which has enabled many of them to be self-reliant and self-perpetuating. They run a 12-week vocational 'up skilling' programme with the local further education college – providing training in woodland and landscaping management. With the local high schools they run John Muir Awards and with primary schools all manner of events, conservation projects and an 8-week Junior Ranger programme (delivered in conjunction with support from the University of Edinburgh).

On the broader community engagement front, they have run a very wide variety of seasonal activities covering arts and crafts work, circus skills, outdoor theatre performances, environmental education, historic and cultural environment themes – the list is endless! From Ben's perspective some of the most important events have been the large 'one-off' events. In 2017 the Trust took a big risk: deciding to use a significant proportion of the annual budget to arrange and host a Family Forest Festival. This was incredibly successful and has really put the park "on the map" and back in the hearts and minds of the local populace.

On the park management side there is also lots for the council and the Trust to do: organising path network improvements (winding paths discourage motorbike misuse) and new orienteering and interpretation waymarkers to encourage people to use and explore the whole park. There is always lots of tree and woodland work to be carried out in particular at the moment thinning and restructuring of the Millennium-planted woods.



To find out more about the work of Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust visit www.elgt.org.uk. Ben can be contacted at ben@elgt.org.uk. There is a Facebook page for news and events at Craigmillar Castle Park at <https://www.facebook.com/Craigmillar-Castle-Park-189368128134952/>

Doune Community Woodland Group

– Tony Farrant (*Chair, Doune Community Woodland Group*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/szKLppWXGAc>

This presentation was prefaced by introductory words from Rory Macleod, Estate Manager for the woodland owners Moray Estates. Rory was keen to emphasise the excellent working relationship that had developed between the estate and the community at Doune Ponds and associated woods - showing how mutual benefit can be achieved through close collaborative working and dialogue: a good example of a community woodland thriving through management agreement as opposed to requiring outright community ownership. From the Estate's perspective the 40-acre ex-sand & gravel quarry had proven difficult to find a use for. Attempts to develop an income through wildfowling had failed and whilst parts of the site had historically had local authority management - primarily on account of its Nature Reserve status - the council had been finding it increasingly difficult in recent years to find the necessary resources to keep access open and the vegetation adequately managed. From early discussion between the Estate and local Kilmadock community council in 2014, a woodland group formed and a management agreement was formulated. Since this time the Estate has been both amazed and delighted with the transformation that the woodland group has brought about.

Tony picked up the story from a community standpoint. Early efforts were on building community support for the work ahead: building the membership, recruiting volunteers, seeking funding for tools and storage, setting up social media/PR and developing a Management Plan. The Group realised that some 'quick win' projects would help attract attention and a local 'buzz'. Almost from the outset there has been a strong group of volunteers eager to get stuck in and the renovation of an overgrown picnic area was a great and symbolic early success. Links with the high school have led to pupils doing parts of Duke of Edinburgh awards in the woods. The group have held numerous community events including fun runs, children's and family activity days and host regular events utilising local and professional expertise (FrogLife, RSPB, local botanists etc) and primary school visits. Other community links include with Forth Valley orienteering club (the woods are formally mapped for orienteering) as well as developing important relationships with their local MP (good political/economic leverage!) and Lady Moray – head of Moray Estates.

At the heart of Doune Woods is the work of the volunteers – who meet every Wednesday morning (weekends too if there's a big project on). Apart from purchasing a ride-on tractor for moving materials around, all work is manual (though one volunteer does have a mini-excavator!) and they have also had some 'corporate volunteering' from aggregate company Cemex. An important principle is to make new build trails as all ability as possible which has allowed access for visits from Trossachs Mobility as well as for some local, previously excluded, disabled residents.

Tony finished by summarising some of the criteria that he feels underpin their success at Doune Woods: the volunteers always take a structured approach in project work, always try to engage and involve as wide a spectrum of people/organisations as possible and always design and deliver to a high specification – it looks better, it lasts longer.



To find out more about the work of Doune Community Woodland Group visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DouneCommunityWoodlandGroup/>

Dunbar Community Woodland Group

– Isobel Knox (*Secretary, Dunbar Community Woodland Group*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/CiHVG0qcETo>

Isobel opened by remarking how inspiring it was to see and hear about these woodland groups – all doing amazing work and echoing the efforts of her own group that has been in existence since 2000 – the woods have been owned by the community since 2007. Lochend Woods are part of what was once the Lochend Estate and contain the old garden and some ruins. It has been a managed woodland since the 18th century but the trees now growing in the woodland (mostly Sycamore and Scots Pine) were planted shortly after the 2nd World War, with most earlier trees having been cleared and used to help the war effort. She showed a contemporary aerial photograph showing how the woods – despite creeping suburbanisation of much of the land encircling the old town of Dunbar – function as an important greenspace for the community and wildlife corridor for its non-human visitors and inhabitants (including albino squirrel!!).

The woodland backs onto the high school and primary school grounds and consequently there have been easy and valuable links established between the community woods and successive younger generations passing through the schools. A younger kid's club Muddy Buddies is very successful whilst the older pupils do John Muir Awards (Dunbar being John Muir's birthplace). The scouts and guides also run activities in the woods (bushcraft, camps, wild cooking etc) and there have been skills and training connections with further education colleges in the past. Community activities include regular Dunbar Running Club events (Park Run soon to start), litter picks and tree planting and the usual range of barbecues, Easter Egg hunts, bonfires, green woodworking, and social functions (much eating and drinking) around the campfire, the cob wood-fired pizza oven and the solar kiln(!).

Being so 'hemmed in' by housing, a perennial issue that the group has to contend with is encroachment and interference with trees on the woodland boundary. This can be time consuming and demoralising so in an attempt to take a pre-emptive step to resolving this, the woodland group have worked up a Woodland Code leaflet that is occasionally distributed to perimeter housing to foster support their work and reinforce a respect for the integrity of the woods themselves.

Over the almost-twenty years of activity DCWG have achieved many 'on the ground' projects too: trail building, interpretation and signage work, dam renovation and new timber structures for social functions. Above all, Isobel's slides of the woods through the seasons conveyed the beauty and importance of this valuable local resource.



You can find out more about Dunbar Community Woodland Group at www.dunbarwoods.org and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DunbarCWG/>

Barriers & Routes to Community Woodland establishment

– Anna Lawrence (*Director, CWA and social forestry consultant*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/Cw6T0goACvU>

During 2018 Anna had been commissioned by CSGNT to undertake a survey of community woodland groups across the central Scotland region to explore their experiences with a view to understanding what limits there are to community land tenure in the region (link to this report below). As this current networking meeting was ostensibly about sharing experiences and ideas to give useful and constructive ‘take home’ messages, Anna’s presentation intended to review her survey findings to give a variety of (hopefully helpful) examples of where communities have made a success of their particular woodland tenure and where there were commonly encountered pitfalls that might be avoided through forewarning.

She remarked how today’s meeting was remarkably representative of the diversity of woodland occupancy and control typical in the region: from management agreements with private landowners (Doune), charitable trusts/social enterprises working in council-owned woodland (Castlemillar Castle Park) and groups in complete ownership of their woodland (Dunbar) – proof that all were valid and could be successful. Her presentation (powerpoint slideshow) started with an explanation of the political context – historical and up to the present – that is enabling communities to take control of woodlands. This was followed by summation of the typical ‘drivers’ that stimulated communities to seek control (and/or ownership) in the first place as well as the disincentives to this process. Whilst Capacity and Competence were often common denominators that limited both appetite and ability to take on woodland management, two of the largest issues were: Neighbours – disparate or contradictory aspirations at the boundaries of woodland; and Community Buy-In – being able to accurately define the geographical catchment of a particular woodland’s “community” and then to effectively engage with that catchment. This contrasts with rural areas where often the community is a discrete village or number of villages in a glen (say) and where woodland occupancy and use is well-established, structured and understood.

Anna talked through a number of routes to woodland ownership or (at least) management control: working with developers and using Section 75 agreements to initiate some community stakeholding; negotiated transfer of land where a private landowner is willing to sell and finally the more recent Asset Transfer mechanisms for communities to acquire public land (and buildings). She highlighted some cross-cutting issues that were pertinent in whatever route was taken (slide below and in online presentation) and then presented five community woodland group examples to illustrate their differing aspirations and the resultant ‘journeys’ that they have taken to their current status.

Reasons to own or control woodland in Central Scotland (according to the research):

- to address neglect in public (or rarely, private) land;
- to protect land from housing development;
- to develop access and recreation;
- less often, to grow food and demonstrate sustainable urban production.

Compared with other parts of Scotland, reasons do not usually include:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Productive woodland management

Cross-cutting issues

- Choose the right channel for acquiring land
- Consider your need for funding beyond acquisition
- Find and keep a knowledgeable and supportive contact in the local authority
- Be aware that this is novel territory for many lawyers.
- Don’t expect it to be quick and easy.
- Don’t see it as your divine right to own the land – be prepared to show how you will manage it better

Anna’s report can be found online at

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328791865_Factors_affecting_community_tenure_of_woodlands_and_green_spaces_in_central_Scotland

The Volunteer Management Cycle

– Adrian Murtagh (*Head of Business Development, Volunteer Scotland*)

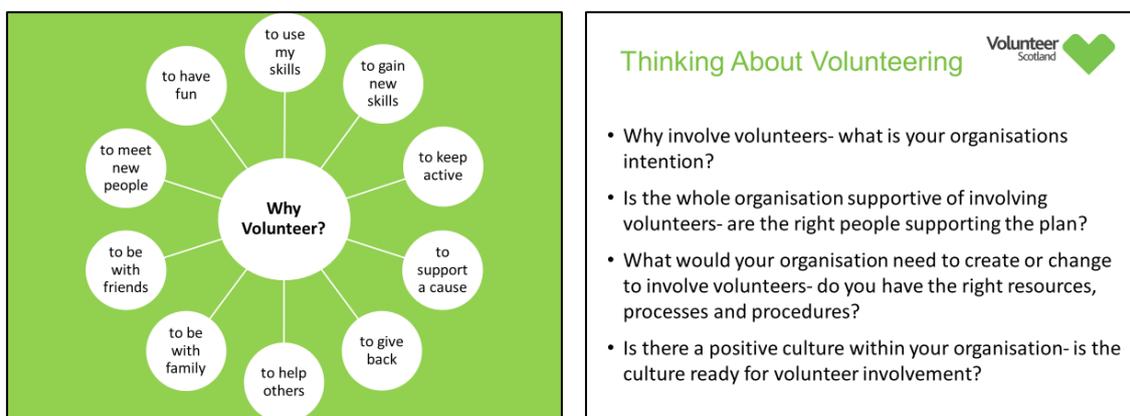
This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/Cw6T0qoACvU>

Adrian's opening observation was that at a national level the uptake of volunteering has been 'flat lining' for some years and, if anything, is on the decline. What this means is that things - and organisations wanting to engage the services of volunteers - have to change.

He began with the Scottish Government's definition of Volunteering: *the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary.* In order for an organisation to successfully recruit, retain and sustain volunteers, there has to be something in it for everybody. This means that an organisation needs to better anticipate and understand the motivation for volunteering. Unsurprisingly most volunteers do it for fun – they want (and need) to enjoy it! Yes, most people will volunteer for something if they are asked to do it *and* if they believe in the cause, but they are unlikely to *remain* as a volunteer if it's not enjoyable and rewarding.

Another key influencing factor is that, in today's world, people's lives are complex and busy. In consequence, their available time is not only precious but differs widely from one person to the next. Some people prefer once-a-year volunteering (for a concerted time period), others prefer once a week or month, some may only be able (but very willing) to give a few minutes/hours as and when the chance arises. Offering a diversity of volunteering opportunities if possible can therefore be beneficial. Also – never assume a volunteer's professional skills are what they want to offer through their volunteering: some volunteers want a change from their daily lives rather than more of the same in their spare time! A useful slide summarised common motivations for volunteering (also below).

Adrian introduced the concept of the Volunteer Management Cycle – a useful 4-stage iterative process of decision-making, monitoring, reviewing and feeding back to initiate and run a successful volunteering programme. Additionally, Volunteer Scotland (VS) run a range of training/support services and are keen to keep a good dialogue going with the Community Woodlands Association into the future – given the strong reliance and inclusion of volunteers in all the work of its member groups. There will soon be a free online modular training course covering Volunteer Management available through the VS website and Adrian will ensure CWA is informed of its availability.



Volunteer Scotland have guidance notes, events/further training details at <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/>.

Adrian is contactable directly at Adrian.Murtagh@VolunteerScotland.org.uk

Beechbrae – Site Visit - Ally Graham & Sammy Saunders

The Beechbrae Wood initiative was established in 2012 and is a social enterprise located on the edge of Blackridge – an ex-mining village of c.2,000 with all the issues associated with high levels of unemployment, economic deprivation and limited opportunity. Ally & Sammy described the evolution of Beechbrae whose aims are to use holistic woodland management as a catalyst for wider social and environmental improvement including growing fresh quality food, practical skills training for the local community, biodiversity improvements for the site and increased physical and mental health & wellbeing for all participants. At times it has been a particularly challenging ‘journey’ for Ally, the volunteer board and (2 additional) funded staff with demoralising levels of vandalism at the outset although this has decreased in recent years. Now seven years on, they have a number of strong relationships with the community, including an emphasis on local children and school groups, in food growing, woodland and orchard tree planting as well as delivering summer activities programmes, outdoor cooking, food tasting, composting, whilst the site itself is becoming an increasingly cherished local ‘resource’.

It’s a constant struggle for funding - currently they have three part-time posts: Ranger, Gardener and Administrator. They also make the most of partnership working which brings in additional resources e.g. a mental health referral programme ‘Branching Out’ (NHS & FCS partnership) with other individuals bring other expertise (e.g. Royal Botanic Gardens support with cultural plant use workshops).

Asked what she might have done differently with the benefit of hindsight, Ally admitted that she could have been more transparent with others (e.g. friends, like-minded people, organisations etc) over early concerns, fears and challenges. This may have made the ‘journey’ less stressful and probably given much-needed emotional as well as mental support.

Asked to give just one of highlight of work to date, Ally said simply witnessing local children – first seen visiting whilst on organised school visits – coming back at the weekends and bringing their parents to go pond dipping and to show them their seedlings, vegetables etc feels like a real validation of their efforts.

You can find out more about Beechbrae at www.beechbrae.co.uk - including an archived blog going back as far as May 2012 charting the progress of the project. Their Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/beechnraewood> .



Ally talking through the Highs and Lows of a seven-year evolution



Amazement at mid-February veggies growing in the polytunnel



Talking, sharing experiences and Smiling...

Some feedback from the day:

Being at such an early stage of our project it proved to be an invaluable insight to the mountain of work we have to do and was most helpful - all was interesting and great to see the examples of what can be achieved.

Very informative especially for a group setting out on Community Ownership re Community Woodland creation. Opportunity to network and learn from others' experiences.

Are there particular themes or interests you would like to see featured or discussed at a future event?

More on land management and ongoing costs. I had not appreciated the continuing costs and at this stage have no idea how ours are going to be met.

Aspect of particular concern for group is ongoing maintenance of Woodland – any advice/shared experience on this topic would be useful.

Would you recommend others to take part in such an event?

I think to even think about it (i.e. setting up a community woodland) any group would need this sort of start.

Any other comments:

More time actually networking would have been of help to me, did not really get a chance to speak to everybody but you can only do so much in a day. Have you considered doing a show?

Most informative and useful event for a group setting out to create a Community Woodland.