

**Testing a framework to describe models of community woodland case studies:
Six case studies of Scottish community woodlands**

**A report by the Community Woodlands Association
on behalf of Forest Research**



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This report was commissioned by Forest Research. Responsibility for the accuracy of facts, and for opinions and interpretations expressed in the report, remains with the Community Woodlands Association.

Introduction

Background to the research

Under its social research programme, Forest Research (FR) is charged by the Forestry Commission to research:

How do different models of ownership and / or management of trees woods and forests work in relation to different contexts and objectives? Which business models best support these?

Work to date has included baseline studies to provide an overview of the current state of community woodlands in Scotland, Wales and England, and an evidence review of community woodland governance for the Independent Panel on Forestry (IPF), combined with a number of workshops to share experiences and define priorities.

These have identified a knowledge gap in terms of understanding of the range of models currently emerging. In particular there is a need to:

- Develop an analytical framework for documenting and comparing governance models
- Identify knowledge gaps in relation to community decision-making processes, sourcing and application of silvicultural expertise, and business models.

A draft framework was developed to help structure the evidence analysed for the IPF report (Lawrence and Molteno, 2012)¹. Scotland, with a well-developed community woodland sector, was identified as an area where it would be valuable to both compile additional case studies and to test the framework.

CWA was commissioned by Forest Research to deliver 6 Scottish case studies documenting various community governance models, and which paid particular attention to communities' technical management decisions - knowledge, advisory sources, decision-making processes. These studies would both complement work carried out in putting together the IPF evidence review and provide an opportunity to field test the use of the analytical framework as a means of creating useful profiles for comparative research.

The specific objectives for the research were twofold:

- Document six case studies based on a standard profile and description
- Test and develop a framework for documenting models of community woodland governance.

¹ Lawrence, A. and S. Molteno (2012). Community forest governance: a rapid evidence review. A report by Forest Research on behalf of the Independent Panel on Forestry. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/views/>

Methodology

As noted, CWA was commissioned by FR to deliver 6 case studies which would both complement the existing body of work and provide the opportunity to critically test the theoretical framework. Two sample case studies² were initially provided by FR to illustrate the proposed structure and guide the content of the work; further case studies were made available during the course of the work, including those produced for the IPF evidence review, and 5 studies produced by Llais y Goedwig in Wales³

These case studies all have a two-part structure: the first part comprising a number of brief text chapters, with a set of headings which varied slightly between studies, although there was a clear commonality in the subject matter, which in turn summarised the group or project which was the subject of the study, outlined the background and history, detailed how it worked, and included comments on the impact of the project, an indication of the “transferability” of the model, where appropriate and a discussion of lessons learnt from the group’s experience.

The second part comprised a standardised profile table which recorded key information and facilitated between groups. This consisted of four sections each with a number of subheadings:

- Institutional context: ownership; access and use rights; regulations/statutory responsibilities
- Internal organisation: community members; structure/legal status/financial structures; representation; participation in decision making; communication and learning processes; forest management objectives and planning procedures; business models; benefit distribution rules
- External linkages: partnerships and agreements; associations
- Resources: forest; funding sources; knowledge

Six community woodland groups (or more precisely, 5 groups and one partnership initiative) were selected⁴ from amongst the CWA membership, which includes the vast majority of community woodland organisations in Scotland. The six groups were:

Abriachan Forest Trust
Borders Forest Trust
Dunnet Forestry Trust
Forres Community Woodlands Trust
North West Mull Community Woodland Company
Sunart Oakwoods Initiative

² Community Forests in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany and Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme, England. Further case studies, including those prepared for the IPF, and by Llais y Goedwig, were made available during the course of the work.

³ <http://llaisgoedwig.org.uk/what-we-do/case-studies/>

⁴ The rationale for the selection is discussed in a later section.

Representatives (usually Board members) of each group were identified and contacted. These community representatives were sent a brief paper outlining the context and purposes of the research, and copies of the Neroche and North-Rhine Westphalia case studies to illustrate the framework. All groups that were contacted agreed to take part.

As CWA had limited time and capacity to complete the research, it was decided to split the workload. Three of the case studies (Abriachan, Dunnet and Forres) would be compiled by CWA, based on face to face interviews and follow up discussions by telephone and email with representatives of the respective groups.

Initial work to populate the profile table and provide analytical text on the other three (Borders, Northwest Mull and Sunart) studies was delegated to individuals associated with the groups (a Trustee, the Development Manager, and a Steering group member respectively). Follow-up emails and telephone conversations were used to cross-check the information provided and draw out particular points of interest in more detail.

Additional sources of information were accessed wherever possible to triangulate information provided the community representatives. These included business plan and forest management plans for the groups held on file by CWA or available on the group's websites. The websites of Companies House and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator were used to obtain company incorporation and charity registration dates.

Writing up of the six case studies proceeded in parallel, to maintain a common structure and ensure a degree of conformity across the studies. Draft case studies were sent to the community groups via their representatives for checking and approval. Some minor amendments were proposed by community representatives and incorporated in the final report. A draft of the six studies and the introductory sections was also forwarded to Forest Research for comment, with which there was further communication by telephone and email regarding the structure and content of the discussions and conclusions chapter.

One key point of clarification related to the content of the final section of descriptive text. In some previous case studies this section was headed "transferability", with the text attempting to indicate how easily the model could be applied to other places. This may have been valuable when looking at a one-off, unique cases, but didn't seem a particularly insightful approach for the Scotland, where a standard governance model prevails. Instead, it was decided, under the heading "lessons learned", to document some of the unique features of interest of the groups studied: in effect to look at the things they have done differently in spite of the common governance structure.

The final report also includes an analysis of the framework: how effective it was at documenting the groups which were the subject of the case studies, and what insights the process of producing the case studies gave for the development and refinement of the framework.

Overview

This paper presents 6 case studies of Scottish community woodland organisations:

Abriachan Forest Trust
Borders Forest Trust
Dunnet Forestry Trust
Forres Community Woodlands Trust
North West Mull Community Woodland Company
Sunart Oakwoods Initiative

The Sunart Oakwoods Initiative is an unincorporated partnership project led by Forestry Commission Scotland, the other five are community based and owned organisations incorporated as Companies Limited by Guarantee, all with charitable status.

Borders Forest Trust is a regional body which operates on a number of levels: both owning woodland (and open land for the purposes of afforestation) in its own right, and working with individual community woodland groups. The other 4 are “local” in focus.

Dunnet Forestry Trust lease Dunnet Forest from Scottish Natural Heritage, and have more recently been gifted a small wood by private individuals, the other 3 own their woodlands.

Forres Community Woodland Trust own urban fringe woodlands acquired from the private sector. The other two acquired their woods from Forestry Commission Scotland

Abriachan Forest Trust acquired their forest in 1998, before the availability of Lottery funding or the National Forest Land Scheme.

North West Mull Community Forest Company acquired Ardhu & Langamull woods through the National Forest Land Scheme, and with financial support from the Scottish Land Fund.

The individual case studies are prefaced by a brief introduction to community woodlands in Scotland, and descriptions of the main features and practical implications of the charitable company limited guarantee structure which has become, for various reasons, the standard model in the Scottish community woodland sector: it is hoped this reduces the need for repetition in the individual studies, which focus on the various (and very different) activities, operations and organisational models that the community groups have delivered and developed within this common structure, and on the important lessons learned.

Community Woodland Groups in Scotland

It is estimated that there are over 200 community woodland groups⁵ in Scotland, although precise calculation is problematic, given the lack of agreed definitions. The Community Woodlands Association, the representative body for the sector, has just over 130 community-led member groups, plus two regional “umbrellas” who between them represent 40+ groups. In addition there are 30 or so development trusts and other community-owned organisations which own woodlands, but for whom woodland management is not their primary focus.

The community woodland sector is relatively well-developed in Scotland: not only in terms of the size and number of community woodland groups and range of operations and activities they carry out, but also in the development of effective peer networking, and the establishment of representation and support services for the sector. The availability of support services and a national network has influenced the development of the sector significantly, greatly increasing access to and sharing of knowledge and information, and arguably fostering a degree of standardisation across structures and practice, as groups are willing to share constitutions, successful funding applications, and information on funders and regulators.

The six groups which are the subject of the case studies presented here are not a random sample of the full population of Scotland’s community woodland groups. Sunart and BFT are each unique, with no obvious comparables in Scotland, the other 4 are drawn from a cadre of 15-20 similar groups. All have been established a number of years, and all are at the “more developed” end of the spectrum; larger forests, with significant community control, more active, bigger range of projects. Five of the groups have a common structure, all being incorporated as companies limited by guarantee with charitable status, yet within that structure they have organised themselves and operated in very different ways.

These groups were selected for the range of activities undertaken and track record of delivery, over an extensive period of time, which ensure that they (the individuals and the governance structures) have been effectively tested. Naturally each group’s operations have reflected both the nature of the forest resource which they took on, and the needs of the community they serve. Crucially, each group has recognised the human and other resources available and played to their strengths.

Company Structures

Almost all community-led, landowning organisations in Scotland are incorporated as companies limited by guarantee (CLG). Companies limited by guarantee have no

⁵ This figure doesn’t include the many crofting townships who have created woodlands on common grazings (but have a restricted membership), or the numerous groups of conservation volunteers who work in conjunction with local authority ranger services or the Woodland Trust (and are not community-led).

Likewise, the number of community woodland groups does not correspond to the number of community woodlands. Some groups own or manage two or more woodlands, whilst others work in informal partnership with public or private sector landowners. Some groups are still in the process of acquiring woods, whilst a few are focussed on training and woodworking, rather than ownership and broad management.

share capital or shareholders; they are owned by members (typically defined by geographic residence) who act as guarantors, undertaking to contribute a nominal amount (usually £1) in the event of the winding up of the company. Typically they are non-profit distributing and governed by a Board of Directors who are not remunerated other than reimbursement of expenses.

The company limited by guarantee became the “standard” company form in the community land sector in the 1990s, as emerging groups were encouraged to adopt the CLG form by statutory bodies (e.g. the Community Land Unit of Highlands and Islands Enterprise) and funders (e.g. Scottish Land Fund). Peer-to-peer networking of community woodland groups also contributed to standardisation, as there was widespread sharing and borrowing of documents, including constitutions, between groups.

The use of CLG was formalised in 2003 by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act⁶, which requires that community bodies are incorporated as company limited by guarantee, and also demands that the articles and memorandum contain certain provisions, notably, defining geographic area by post codes, ensuring local community control of the company and a dissolution clause ensuring an asset lock⁷.

Although the Land Reform Act has had only limited success in facilitating community land acquisition, it has had a very considerable impact on community company structure, since all new community bodies are obliged to adopt a Land Reform compliant constitution if they believe that they might ever wish to use the provisions of the Act. Thus, the template LRA-compliant constitution provided by HIE⁸ has become the standard model for new groups.

In 2005 Forestry Commission Scotland launched the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS), to provide a mechanism for community acquisition of the National Forest Estate. The scheme adopted many criteria from the Community Right to Buy (CR2B) provisions in part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which are reflected in the NFLS guidance notes⁹.

⁶ The full text of the Act is here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents>
Guidance notes here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/06/08101427/0>

⁷ It should be noted that most of the pioneers of community land ownership are not eligible to use the Community Right to Buy Provisions of the Land Reform Act. Of the 5 incorporated organisations considered here, only NWMWC have a Land Reform Act compliant constitution; none of the others use postcodes to define their geographic area.

⁸ Available from <http://www.hie.co.uk/support-for-communities/community-assets/>

⁹ Available from <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-66re5j>

The formally stated eligibility requirements are based on CR2B and include:

- must be a company limited by guarantee;
- must have at least 20 company members except in exceptional circumstances;
- private or family applications are not eligible;
- a majority of the company members must be members of the community except where for good reason Forestry Commission Scotland has agreed otherwise;
- members of the community must have overall control of the company;
- any surplus assets or funds must be applied for the benefit of the community;
- the main purpose of the community organisation must be consistent with furthering the achievement of sustainable development;
- must have articles of association or company memorandum that ensure that if wound up, the land acquired passes to Ministers or to another organisation approved by Ministers.

However, as the NFLS is a voluntary scheme FCS has scope to exercise some discretion in applying these eligibility requirements, so whilst the community body must have a geographically defined membership comprised of those resident and eligible to vote which can be identified for the purposes of holding a ballot, alternative company structures or geographical definitions (e.g. a Community Council area or a Local Authority ward) are permissible. Additional guidance on appropriate governance structures for community bodies is in preparation.

Whilst alternative company forms exist, e.g. Trusts, Industrial and Provident Societies, Companies Limited by Shares, Community Interest Companies, and Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisations, there are very few examples in the community land sector. Two notable non-CLGs are the Stornoway Trust, established in 1923, which is constituted as a Trust¹⁰, and the Treslaig & Achaphubuil Crofters Woodland Trust, which is incorporated as a Company Limited by Shares.

Charitable Status

The majority of Community Woodland groups are registered as charities. Charitable status is considered to provide a number of benefits, including Tax advantages (exemption from Corporation Tax), greater access to funders (e.g. charitable trusts which can only fund other charities), and widespread public goodwill.

Formal procedures for charity recognition in Scotland were introduced by the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005¹¹, prior to this Scottish organisations with charitable purposes could apply to the Inland Revenue to be recognised as charities for tax purposes.

Charitable status brings some additional reporting requirements, and places some limitations on the activities that a charity can undertake. Firstly, everything the charity does must be covered by its charitable purposes¹²; secondly, whilst trading in the course of carrying out a primary purpose of the charity is exempt from tax, trading for fundraising purposes isn't (except within certain financial limits)¹³.

¹⁰ The word Trust is often used in the names of organisations, (e.g. Borders Forest Trust, John Muir Trust, Assynt Crofters' Trust) which are not legally Trusts but companies.

¹¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/10/contents>

The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) was established in December 2003

¹² The acceptable charitable purposes are: the prevention or relief of poverty; the advancement of education; the advancement of religion; the advancement of health; the saving of lives; the advancement of citizenship or community development; the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science; the advancement of public participation in sport; the provision of recreational facilities, or the organisation of recreational activities; the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation; the promotion of religious or racial harmony; the promotion of equality and diversity; the advancement of environmental protection or improvement; the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage; the advancement of animal welfare; and any other purpose that may reasonably be regarded as analogous to any of the preceding purposes.

¹³ Note: it doesn't matter that the funds raised will be spent charitably.

This standard constitutional model has significant implications for questions of benefit distribution: essentially a strict line is drawn which precludes private (individual) gain derived from membership or directorship of community companies. Group constitutions will specify that Directors¹⁴ may not be remunerated beyond out of pocket expenses, and employees of the company may not serve as Directors¹⁵. In addition to the prohibition of direct financial gain, the assets of the charity must be managed charitably: this will usually preclude any preferential distribution of forest products such as firewood.

Where a charity wishes to undertake a project involving trading which falls out-with their charitable purposes, they may set up a separate (non-charitable) trading company, typically a company limited by shares. In the most common model the shares are owned by the main charitable body, and to minimise tax, virtually all of the taxable profits of the trading company are paid over to the charity.

¹⁴ Or “Trustees”, or “committee members” – the appellation varies between groups.

¹⁵ Some also prohibit employees from being company members.

Abriachan Forest Trust (type: private / community - empowering)

Summary

The Abriachan Forest Trust (AFT) is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status¹⁶, membership is open to residents of Abriachan parish. AFT was established to bring into community ownership 534 hectares of forest and open hill land, which had been placed on the open market by the Forestry Commission. The Trust has managed this land to create local employment, improve the environment and encourage its enjoyment by the public through a network of spectacular paths, family suited mountain bike trails and innovative education opportunities.

Key points of interest:

- Abriachan was the first significant community acquisition from Forestry Commission and at the time, was the largest community-owned forest in Scotland.
- AFT has been a pioneer in forest education and skills training.
- AFT has engaged contractors rather than employed staff

Background

Abriachan is a small Highland village perched high above the north shore of Loch Ness, approximately 10 miles southwest of the Inverness. In 1994 the Forestry Commission invited comment on the effects of potential sales of state forest on local community rights, and the community council voiced concerns about the possibility of losing long-standing rights of access to common grazings, peat banks, etc. However when the forest was put on the market the following year, the sales particulars made no mention of access rights; when this was queried, FC claimed that there had been no response to the consultation process.

A steering group was formed to monitor the sale and safeguard the local interest: and the idea of buying the forest was proposed, inspired by the success of the Assynt crofters' buyout campaign. A feasibility study was completed (mid-1996), and the District Valuation Officer had valued the 863 hectares which were up for sale at £425,000.

AFT had considerable initial success in its fundraising efforts¹⁷, however the failure of bids to the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund dictated a revised strategy, and it was decided to buy the cheaper of the available options: 534 hectares, valued at £152,000.

¹⁶ Companies House registration date 10/1/1997, Registered charity from 10/1/1998

¹⁷ Major contributors were Scottish Natural Heritage, the Rural Challenge Fund, The Highland Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, ENTRUST and British Petroleum

How it works

Membership is open to Abriachan residents¹⁸ as listed on the electoral roll. This is a relatively small constituency: about 120 people live in the village, from which the Trust has ~70 members, plus some Junior members, so a majority of the community are members of the Trust. There are also a number of "Friends of the Abriachan Forest Trust" who live outwith the community but are supportive of the Trust's aims.

The AFT is managed by a Board of up to twelve Directors ("Trustees") nominated and elected by the membership; at each Annual General Meeting, one-third of the trustees must retire from office. A retiring trustee is eligible for re-election after one term of office but no trustee can serve more than two consecutive terms of office, without standing down for at least one year before becoming eligible again.

The requirement for Directors to step down can cause some difficulty for the management of the Trust, especially where the pool of members is relatively small. Likewise the constitution commits the Trust to a full audit every year, which is a more extensive and costly procedure than the statutory requirement¹⁹ for an independent examination. However, amending the constitution, which would entail additional changes to bring it into line with the Charity test and the Companies Act of 2006, requires the assent of 75% of the entire membership, which itself is a challenging target.

Directors meet monthly. These monthly meetings are open to all AFT members and often also feature guest from e.g. FCS, The Woodland Trust and SNH. Most directors have committed a significant amount of time to the project, over and above attendance at meetings and other requirements of company governance.

A regular newsletter and updates to the Abriachan website²⁰ help to maintain communication with members; this is considered to be easier for AFT with a relatively small membership and constituency than for some of the groups with larger populations.

An interesting effect of AFT's success in acquiring such a large forest from the Forestry Commission, and subsequently in pioneering various educational and social uses of the forest, is that the Directors and contractors have been very much in demand by various organisations (both in the public sector, and other aspirant community land-owning groups) to share their experiences and to give presentations.

Impact

Abriachan Forest was planted between 1970 and 1980 and consists predominantly of lodgepole pine and sitka spruce with some Scots pine and larch. The Trust's objectives are to develop the infrastructure of the forest to improve the amenity value

¹⁸ The area is defined using the old parish boundary, rather than by postcodes, so the Trust's constitution is not Land Reform Act-compliant.

¹⁹ <http://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-your-charity/charity-accounting/>

²⁰ <http://www.abriachan.org.uk/>

for the general public, to naturalise the forest with native species and in the process to create jobs.

It was decided to retain part of the forest for commercial operations which would help sustain the Trust. A contract was secured to provide pulp timber from the clearing and thinning operations, and roads were constructed to facilitate extraction. These operations were further boosted by the purchase of machinery including a mini-forwarder, tractor with chipper and firewood processor.

Small roundwood from harvesting operations is processed and sold as firewood to the local community. The timber is stacked for 1-3 years at a quarry on the edge of the woodland and processed by a local crofter, who is paid per hour by the Trust. The timber is processed straight into a 3-ton agri trailer, which is hitched to the tractor and tipped direct into customers' drive/site.

The long term goal of management is to improve the environmental value of the forest by replacing monoculture spruce and lodgepole pine blocks with native species: to date, over 200,000 native trees have been planted, riparian zones have been restored and the black grouse population has increased. School-led surveys have demonstrated that the increase in species of ground flora and fauna have markedly improved the biodiversity of the woodland.

There has been considerable investment in recreational infrastructure: a 30km path network, including all-abilities paths and 13km of mountain bike trails, plus car parking, interpretation and a variety of buildings and structures. These include a forest school classroom, two tree houses, a roundhouse, a bird hide, and rain shelters.

This has been reflected in the substantial visitor numbers, and the Trust's efforts have been recognised as contributing to the local tourist industry. In 2007 AFT won the Multipurpose Woodland category in Scotland's Finest Woodlands Awards and the Nancy Ovens' Award for outstanding contribution to community play.

However the Trust is perhaps better known for its more formal work with a range of young and adult client groups:

- Forest School sessions for pupils with additional support needs
- Skills for Work courses for secondary3/4 pupils and activity agreements
- Delivering woodland based learning for APEX²¹ clients, recovering alcoholics, drug misusers and ex-offenders
- Improving Mental Health project²², which delivers a programme of activities for those in transition between hospitalisation, supported accommodation and independent living

Future plans include a literacy trail project and the development of work with single mothers, building transferable employability skills and running a Forest School crèche while the mothers learn. Mountain Bike training and Bushcraft skills are also delivered in the forest.

²¹ <http://www.apexscotland.org.uk/>

²² In partnership with NHS Birchwood Highland and New Craigs

The success of the education and training programme has necessitated an expansion for facilities at the forest classroom: funding has been sourced and work is due to get underway.

Not all the projects which have been investigated by AFT have borne fruit. In 2002 there were proposals to develop a bunkhouse, which were eventually shelved, largely because neighbouring landowners had similar plans and the Trust did not wish to compete. In fact two other local bunkhouse projects have received planning permission, but to date neither has proceeded.

Additionally, there has been a long-standing aspiration to provide affordable housing, however the site location and the costs of providing serviced plots has militated against taking this forward.

Lessons learned

A distinctive feature of AFT's operations has been the reliance on self-employed contractors rather than direct employment, and AFT is one of very few "large"²³ community woodland groups which have never employed staff. This may be a consequence of the timing of AFT's establishment, which predates many of the funding streams which have supported subsequent community woodland acquisition and development projects.

There are a number of advantages to this approach: reducing the administrative burden on the Trust and freeing the Trust of the pressure to chase funding to safeguard jobs. However, it can also increase the burden on volunteer directors, notably when developing and fundraising for new projects: there is no Development Manager or Project Officer to be tasked to take these projects forward.

The first contract post let was that of a professional consultant forester. It was felt that although there were group members with experience of forest operations, they lacked forest management skills, and that it was important for the credibility of the (pioneering) group to be seen to be managing the forest "professionally".

The contract is re-let at three year intervals, and is currently held by Dietrich Pannwitz²⁴. AFT Directors are keen to emphasize the value of the consultant forester, who regularly attends the monthly meeting of directors and is called upon to give advice on a wide range of issues.

Other currently self-employed workers include a forest craftsperson, a 4-strong (=2 FTE) education and recreation team, managed by a volunteer coordinator, and a part-time administrator/bookkeeper (c., 2-3 days a month)

Abriachan's work is widely known and respected within the sector: there has been an understandable tendency in some quarters to attribute this entirely to the drive and capability of the individuals involved, and therefore to suggest that the Trust's

²³ In terms of turnover, outputs, etc

²⁴ <http://www.sylvestrus.co.uk/>

success could not therefore be replicated elsewhere. Whilst undoubtedly individual skills have played a critical role, the Directors were keen to stress that the Trust has made very good use of its location, adjacent to Inverness, with a large potential client base, but at the same time sufficiently distant to be tranquil and free of distraction.

One concern with the focus on specific client groups is their reliance on local authority and or NHS funding: whilst there is no slackening of need, nor doubt with respect to beneficial outcomes, the ability of service procurers to fund provision is increasingly uncertain, which calls into questions the long term sustainability of such work.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	Woodland owned by community company
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation. Area includes sites designated as SSSI
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	c. 70 members. Membership is open to all adult residents of parish. Those not eligible for full membership can become "Friends of Abriachan Forest" for £5 / year (individuals) £7.50 / year (households)
2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity
2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. AFT employs consultant forester (on contract basis) who advises on forest management
2.5 Communication and learning processes	All members can attend monthly Directors meetings. Newsletter, Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners

2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Sustainable forest management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan
2.7 Business models	Forest management by private sector consultant forester and self-employed forest craftsman. Recent forest harvesting by standing sale. Education programmes delivered by self-employed contractors, overseen by volunteer co-ordinator.
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	Management agreement with SNH re SSSI management. Northern Woodheat NPP Project: an EU Interreg project (through the Northern Periphery Programme) led by Highland Birchwoods investigating small and medium scale woodfuel supply chains. CWA Employability Services Project: A LEADER project led by CWA supporting community woodlands to initiate employability programmes and develop as social enterprises
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	AFT owns 534 ha: a mix of conifer plantation, predominantly Lodgepole Pine, Sitka Spruce, Scots Pine, Larch, and open hill land, plus various buildings on site
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Private sector (BP). Income from trading
4.3 Knowledge	AFT employ a professional forest management consultant, and have sought advice on forestry and other matters from other bodies: FCS, CWA, HIE-CLU, etc, and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the CWA membership. Members of the community have developed considerable knowledge and expertise over the 15 years of AFT's existence, not only of forest management, but of a wide range of activities and operations, most notably in developing pioneering forest education with a range of young and adult client groups.

Borders Forest Trust (type: private / community - empowering)

Summary

Borders Forest Trust (BFT) is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status operating in the Scottish Borders since 1996²⁵. BFT is based near Ancrum in the central Borders: it has a regional membership and remit and takes an umbrella role for several significant Borders projects such as Wooplaw community woodland and the Carrifran Wildwood. It has also developed its own projects, such as Woodschool (now Real Wood Studios), the Ettrick Marshes Restoration project, greening school playgrounds and encouraging hedge planting and management in Berwickshire.

Key points of interest:

- BFT operates at a regional level, with an evolving portfolio of projects
- Three major strands have been ecological restoration, community woodlands and timber processing
- There has been a strong focus on education and individual & community empowerment

Background

The Borders has a rich history, suffering for long periods as disputed land between Scotland and England. Family groups would identify with one or other side, or neither, and security was always an issue, hence the large number of fortified houses or keeps in the area. Today there is fierce rivalry between the Border towns, mostly played out on the rugby pitches.

Forest cover in the Scottish Borders is around 19%, a little above the Scottish average. Around 80% is even aged conifer plantation and, of this, 73% is spruce. Large conifer plantations are found in the south and west of the Borders, while the central area has a mosaic of upland grassland and small farm and estate woods and the eastern Borders is prime arable land with a scattering of shelterbelts and small farm woods. Native woodland covers only 0.26% of the land area and is confined mainly to steep little valleys or cleughs.

BFT's origins are intertwined with those of Wooplaw Community Woodland, the UK's first community woodland buyout, purchased by the local community in October 1987²⁶. Gradually, the Wooplaw group expanded their horizons to form Borders Community Woodlands, and when interest began to develop in setting up a local wood processing and training centre, originally given the title No Butts, the interested parties came together to form Borders Forest Trust.

BFT received a major boost at the start of the 20th century with substantial funding from the Millennium Forest for Scotland for two new collective projects Working with Trees and Living with Trees.

²⁵ Registration Date: 12/01/1996, Registered charity from 30-01-1996

²⁶ See <http://www.wooplaw.org.uk/> for more on the history of Wooplaw Community Woodland

How it works

BFT has a membership of around 700, with a range of membership categories and rates²⁷. Members elect Trustees (currently 12), who can serve a 3 year term of office, after which they must stand down but can apply to serve a second three year term. Elections are held at the AGM if there are more applications to the Board than there are spaces, although this is not usually necessary.

The Trustees usually meet every two months at the BFT offices but they or specialist groups meet more often as required. There is a Financial Sub-group which scrutinises the finances. BFT has a Patron, Rory Bremner, who is resident in the Borders.

BFT has 10 members of staff: a Director, Projects Manager, Woodland Sites Manager, Woodland Officer, Finance Officer, Office Manager, Communications & Fundraising Officer, Community Woodland Officer, Community Liaison & Education Officer and Corehead Site Manager. The Real Wood Studios cooperative has 7 members and the 7 active community woodland groups have their own voluntary management committees.

The active community woodland groups operate autonomously from BFT but nestle under its umbrella, benefitting from joint insurance, help with events and specialist advice from BFT staff and trustees. They are all constituted, usually as Companies Limited by Guarantee, with their own bank accounts and can raise and spend their own funds. Funding for the community woodland groups in the past has come mainly from forestry grants. This source has become much more complex over the last few years, leading to a drying up of income.

BFT's area of operation and remit is much broader than most typical "local" community woodland groups, who usually focus on one wood or the woods around a particular town; so planning and steering the strategic direction of the Trust, and maintaining member support is potentially problematic.

To manage this, the Board has regular strategic reviews and completed one such in the latter part of last year. This involved drafting by key trustees/ members of staff and a special meeting held in the Cross Keys Hotel in Kelso, attended by trustees and staff. Members were not directly consulted but any feedback feeds into the discussions.

The governance structure appears to be sufficiently flexible to allow the BFT Board to pursue their strategic aims. When an opportunity arose recently to bid for the Talla/ Gameshope estate in the Southern Uplands, (offers over £1.1 million) BFT couldn't raise such a sum of money by itself but quickly developed a partnership with the John Muir Trust and raised pledges for more than half the asking price. This was achieved over a period of a few weeks, largely due to the efforts of the Chair, supported by staff and trustees²⁸.

²⁷ <http://www.bordersforesttrust.org/support-us/become-a-member>

²⁸ In the event BFT came narrowly second out of 8 bids.

Impact

BFT is a major landowner in the Borders and adjacent Dumfries & Galloway, with community woodlands, two large sites acquired for afforestation at Carrifran and Corehead and a number of smaller holdings. The various community woodlands are owned by BFT, by the local groups or managed on long-term leases. The largest, Gordon Community Woodland, is about 120 hectares. They are all well established and some have mature and over-mature trees.

The larger sites are undergoing a process of ecological restoration as are a number of other sites in private ownership, looked after by BFT under management agreements. This work is partially funded by the grant system, mainly the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Additional funds come from a variety of different sources, including the Lottery, and the work is carried out by local contractors, topped up by volunteers and trainees.

In addition BFT runs an active education, training and volunteering programme: BFT has led the way with Forest Schools in the Borders. Occasional external contracts are taken and supply an additional income.

Woodschool, now Real Wood Studios, has been a beacon for local timber processing from its inception, inspired by the furniture maker and sculptor Tim Stead, to the present day. Sawlogs of very variable quality come in from the surrounding area to be cut into boards by the state of the art mobile sawmill. The boards are air dried, then kiln dried. The craftsmen then transform them into high quality furniture, kitchen units, flooring and smaller decorative objects. The mobile sawmill also cuts on commission and recently a Hawick craftsman making hand-made Canadian log buildings has been renting space on site.

All of the staff, apart from the Corehead Manager, work from a purpose built office and training centre, adjacent to Real Wood Studios in a woodland glade close to the village of Ancrum. The site is leased from the local estate. The Corehead project, which is in Dumfries & Galloway, has an office in Moffat.

Lessons learned

Borders Forest Trust has a unique role, integrating local and regional perspectives, and social and longer term environmental objectives, which has allowed it to take on a very broad portfolio of projects, including some which would probably not be within the purview of most community woodland groups.

BF has made a considerable impact since its inception in 1996. Its ecological restoration projects have gained international recognition, and the original Wildwood at Carrifran has been the subject of a book, several academic dissertations and a high profile conference.

Real Wood Studios is a model of local value added processing which others have sought to emulate. Great efforts continue to be made to break into new high value markets, with considerable success. Several dozen woodworkers have used the

shared facilities to develop their skills and reputation. Many when they have left, have stayed in the Borders making it a prime area for quality woodworking.

BFT has helped many young trainees gain the skills to get into the forest industry. Countless others, young and older, have been introduced to trees and woodlands through Forest Schools, guided walks, talks, exhibitions and special events such as the annual Scottish Conker Championship held every autumn in Peebles, as part of the Tweed Valley Forest Festival. BFT staff work very hard to raise the profile of woodlands in the Borders and to influence policy, and to date, they have been very successful in this.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	Mixed. BFT owns some woodlands, works with other community and private sector landowners
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. BFT has timber and other rights on land it owns. BFT owns a flock of sheep at Corehead.
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	BFT has > 700 Members, in a range of membership categories. Individual membership is £20/year
2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity
2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors (Trustees). Members ultimately in control of decision making via election of Trustees. The Board has regular strategic reviews (e.g. latter part of last year). This involved drafting by key trustees/ members of staff and a special meeting, attended by trustees and staff. Members were not directly consulted but any feedback feeds into the discussions.
2.5 Communication and learning	Newsletter, website. Active engagement

processes	with other community woodland owners.
2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Sustainable forest management for benefit of community. Significant-scale habitat restoration by afforestation. Long term forest plan(s)
2.7 Business models	Operations funded by grant support and fundraising. Staff team of 10. Many forest operations carried out by contractors and volunteers
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	BFT is part of the Southern Upland Partnership, and is involved in the Working Countryside Group, and the Borders Treefest group. It is a partner of the Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy Group. BFT also maintains links with other environmental NGOs engaged in habitat restoration: Trees for Life, John Muir Trust, RSPB etc.
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	BFT owns 1500 ha land in 5 blocks, the largest being Carrifran wildwood and Corehead Farm. BFT owns two office building & ancilliary shelters, which sit on rented land. Real Wood Studios rent land and main building but own their timber processing building.
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading, Significant public fundraising for acquisitions.
4.3 Knowledge	BFT have a (relatively) large and skilled staff team, and considerable expertise of community forestry, fundraising and business management within the Board of Trustees. BFT also shares information and

	knowledge with a range of other organisations, such as FCS, CWA, and other environmental NGOs engaged in habitat restoration.
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Dunnet Forestry Trust (type: private / community - empowering)

Summary

Dunnet Forestry Trust, established in 2002²⁹ is a community-based company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Membership (currently 550) is open to all adults normally resident in Caithness. The Trust manages two woodlands: its primary focus has been Dunnet Forest (104.5ha) managed on a 25 year lease with the owners Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Heathfield Wood (1.3ha) was recently gifted to the Trust.

Key points of interest:

- DFT leases its main forest holding from a government agency.
- DFT membership is open to a wide geographical area, although the majority are local
- DFT has sought to employ staff and to maintain a staff presence in the forest.

Background

Dunnet Forest lies between the settlements of Castletown (pop 800) and Dunnet on the north Caithness coast, approximately 10km east of Thurso. The nearby Dunnet Head is the most northerly point on the British mainland.

Dunnet Forest was established in the mid-1950s by the Forestry Commission as an experiment into planting and management on difficult soils, using a wide range of species. Drought and rabbits hindered establishment, however, the majority has grown into mature forest, albeit of generally poor form, dominated by Lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce, Corsican pine and mountain pine, and has become highly valued for recreation: publicly accessible woodland is a rarity in Caithness, and the free-draining sandy soils of the forest ensure that it is usable all year round.

The forest is within the Dunnet Links Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated largely for its old dune-slack vegetation, and in 1985 the Forestry Commission sold it to the Nature Conservancy Council³⁰ for £40,000. Dunnet Forest was also part of the Dunnet Links National Nature Reserve, although this designation was removed in 2004 without public consultation.

Community engagement with the forest dates back to 1990, when SNH commissioned Ian MacLennan to produce a "Review of Environmental, Educational and Recreational Opportunities at Dunnet Forest". Views expressed by the community at a subsequent public meeting were incorporated into a European funded project to improve access, interpretation and wildlife habitats.

In 1999 SNH asked a local voluntary group, Dunnet Bay Initiative (DBI), to consider formulating a plan to manage the forest in the future. This was agreed early in 2000

²⁹ Company registration date 10/05/2002 Registered charity from 10-05-2002

³⁰ which became Scottish National Heritage in 1992

and a steering group formed by DBI produces a management plan for the forest, with assistance from a regional support body, North Highland Forest Trust.

After extensive public consultation and negotiation, and the recognition that with publicly accessible woodland such a rarity in Caithness the forest had the potential to become a significant local asset, DFT was incorporated in May 2002, and a 25 year lease was finalised with SNH in January 2003.

How it works

Full membership of the Trust is open to all on the electoral role in Caithness³¹, while non-voting associate membership is available to those with a connection with Caithness by virtue of place of birth or place of work etc. This is a relatively large catchment, but was adopted in recognition that Dunnet Forest is an important amenity for the entire county: however, the majority of DFT members (and Directors) have always been drawn from a much smaller radius.

The DFT Board comprises up to nine Directors elected from the membership. A third of the Board steps down each year, but can stand for re-election. Elections have been required in some years, and attract turnouts of 50-66%.

Directors meet quarterly, usually with a local Councillor and representatives of the Highland Council Ranger Service and SNH present in a non-voting capacity. There are additional director working group meetings for specific functions.

Since 2002, three consultation exercises have been carried out to inform community management of the forest, the most recent being in 2008, which involved sending out nearly 500 questionnaires to members and other stakeholders. In addition the Trust holds regular Open days, maintains a website and produces regular newsletters.

As with most successful community woodland groups, the Board have been very active.

Most Board members have taken on specific roles and responsibilities, e.g. one Director has taken up the Health and Safety remit: overseeing production of risk assessments, ensuring appropriate PPE, undertaking regular safety checks on structures through the forest.

Additionally, Directors have taken a leading role in managing the regular “Log sales days” that the Trust holds one Saturday a month. Initially restricted to the winter months these are now held throughout the year and provide both an important source of income and a very visible opportunity to promote the Trust and receive feedback from customers, many of whom are member or forest users.

When the Trust was established there was considerable discussion as to how best manage forest operations. Three main options were considered:

1. Engaging private sector forest managers to deliver the DFT management plan

³¹ The area is not expressed in postcodes, so the DFT constitution does not comply with Land Reform Act requirements.

2. Employing a Development Officer to manage private sector contractors
3. Employing a Community Forester to carry out operations in-house

Some funding partners were initially keener on the second option, however the clear majority view of both the DBI steering group / DFT Board was to employ a forester directly, on the grounds that this would:

- Maximise local control over the delivery of the plan
- Give increased flexibility to amend plans as circumstances necessitated
- Maintain a staff presence in the forest as a visible symbol of community “ownership”

Over time, as the Trust and the forest have developed, the staff roles have evolved. From 2003-2007 DFT employed a full time community forest manager; charged with carrying out most forest operations as well as the administrative and representative roles. For much of the period a part time forest worker was also employed.

Since 2008 the Trust has employed part-time forest workers and a part time administrative assistant to carry out book-keeping, manage the membership and update the web site. In 2009, after lengthy fundraising, the Trust was able to take on a part-time community forest ranger, to develop the formal use of the forest by a range of client groups.

Impact

The Trust’s management of the Forest has gone through two distinct phases: the first five years were focussed on making the forest fit for purpose, the second have been about strengthening and deepening the community use of the forest.

Dunnet Forest was established as single age, conifer monocultures: by 2003 these were approaching maturity, prone to windthrow and overdue for restructuring. The conventional wisdom at the time was that the forest was completely uneconomic, by virtue of both poor quality crops and distance from market³², and indeed initial felling operations by external contractors were conducted at a significant loss. However, since 2004 DFT has gradually developed firewood sales from the forest: these operate at a small surplus (thanks largely to significant volunteer input from Directors) and turnover grew to £12k by 2007 and £17k by 2011.

The first Management Plan period, 2003-2007, saw extensive restructuring operations, including clearfell of 14ha of windthrown and most vulnerable lodgepole pine stands, and thinning of a further 14ha³³. Restocking utilised a mixture of broadleaves and conifers, and there was further broadleaf enrichment planting through the forest, in total 36,000 trees were planted in this period, Some of the planting stock came from a small tree nursery created in the forest by local Scouts,

³² It is more than 200km to the Norbord OSB mill at Dalcross

³³ The original Plan called for 26 ha clearfelling, reflecting SNH’s desire to remove non-native conifers as quickly as possible. This was scaled back during the WGS/felling license process, and then further reduced once it became apparent that local markets could be found for much of the material. The then-community forest manager regrets that the clearfell area was not reduced still further.

and managed, along with an overflow area in a garden in Dunnet village by the forester and volunteers.

The recreational infrastructure of the forest has been developed significantly. The car park at the SW corner of the forest was enlarged to a capacity of 21 cars, and then tarmacked in 2008, whilst a network of new paths, including a mountain bike trail and a horse riding trail, were created. Within the wood there are now over 17km (11 miles) of trails, which includes 1.7 km made up to all ability standard. Other features include a permanent orienteering course, and a sculpture trail, comprising twelve sculptures and a 6m long xylophone (marimba) which were installed as part of a Highland Year of Culture 2007 arts project. At the same time, public use of the forest has grown considerably, from an estimate of 5000 pa when the lease was signed to 40,000 per annum in 2008³⁴ and probably in excess of 50,000 today³⁵.

Restructuring continues in the second Management Plan, 2008-12, but on a much smaller scale, meanwhile there is a greater emphasis on enhancing its special environmental features and encouraging. Since 2009 the Trust have employed a community forest ranger³⁶ with a remit to increase the structured and formal use of the forest, and in particular to deliver and develop a programme of regular (adult) volunteer work group(s) focused on the forest and structured opportunities for school parties (and other youth groups) to participate in a range of outdoor education, woodland management and maintenance activities.

In addition to the Community Forest Ranger, the Trust employs a part-time administrator and two part-time workers to carry out forest management and maintenance operations, and to harvest and extract woodfuel, and provides placement opportunities and work experience with school non-attenders, through activity agreements with Highland Council Educational Services and unemployed young adults through Community Jobs Scotland.

Lessons learned

DFT is unusual in that it leases Dunnet Forest from a Scottish Government body³⁷, Scottish Natural Heritage: at the time it was seen as a unique arrangement, especially given that the Forest is designated as part of a SSSI. The option to buy the forest was floated by SNH at the very beginning of the process of engagement, however, the majority view in the community was that a lease was preferable:

- 1) If the community could take control of the forest with a peppercorn rent, then it was unclear what additional benefit there would be in ownership: achieving which would have required substantial fundraising³⁸,
- 2) It was felt that a lease would keep SNH involved as a partner, rather than allowing them to walk away from their responsibilities.

³⁴ Figures from people counters installed in main carpark

³⁵ To put these numbers in context, the All Forests Visitor Monitoring Survey 2008 estimated annual visitor numbers to the *entire* Dornoch Forest District (> 60,000 ha) at 119,000 per year

³⁶ Funded by the Forestry for people Challenge Fund and Highland Council

³⁷ Until 2010 community leasing of forest land from FCS was not possible. There are a number of communities currently investigating this option, but no leases in place.

³⁸ It was not clear that funders would see any additionality in ownership either.

3) A lease was seen as a “safer” option, as the community was perceived to be taking on an “uneconomic liability”

The terms of the lease include provision for a regular five year review of the situation, and for DFT to have the option to purchase, as yet DFT haven’t wished to pursue this option.

Initially SNH was very supportive (including financially) of the Trust’s work, and it seems unlikely that the Trust would have been able to take on management of the forest without the commitment of some key staff in the SNH Golspie office. However, from the Trust’s perspective at least, the relationship between DFT and SNH has waxed and waned over the years, reflecting staff changes within SNH Golspie and wider organisational policy changes.

In 2009, following an organisation-wide analysis of property holdings, SNH attempted to dispose of the forest, and there were discussions of a transfer to FCS: this predated the Public Service Reform Bill of 2010 which permitted FCS leasing of land for forest management purposes, and would have been a de facto revocation of the lease by the government. DFT were not in favour of such a move, and the proposals were shelved.

Events at Dunnet have contributed to a more general suspicion of community leasing from public agencies within the wider community woodland movement; there is a widespread perception that such agreements are insecure and vulnerable to policy changes.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	Main woodland area leased by community company from Scottish Natural Heritage. Small woodland area owned by community company
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber resources managed by community company according to management and lease agreements with landowner (SNH)
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation. Main forest is part of SSSI
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	c. 550 members. Membership open to all adult residents of Caithness
2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity

2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. DFT employed Community Forest Manager till 2007, now Community Ranger
2.5 Communication and learning processes	Three large scale community consultations since 2002. Regular Open Days in forest, and monthly log sales where Directors are present and welcome feedback. Newsletters. Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners
2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Sustainable forest management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan
2.7 Business models	Most forest operations carried out by directly employed staff & volunteers.
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	Strong relationship with Dounreay - annual volunteer week with Dounreay apprentices. DFT works closely with SNH and a range of other bodies. Northern Woodheat NPP Project: an EU Interreg project (through the Northern Periphery Programme) led by Highland Birchwoods investigating small and medium scale woodfuel supply chains. CWA Employability Services Project: A LEADER project led by CWA supporting community woodlands to initiate employability programmes and develop as social enterprises
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	DFT leases 104 ha (conifer plantation: LP, MP, CP, SS), and owns a small mixed woodland of 1.5 ha. DFT owns a building on its main site.

4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading, Charitable Trusts
4.3 Knowledge	DFT employed a community forest manager 2003-7, and have subsequently employed forest workers and a community forest ranger. A considerable body of expertise has been built up within the Board and the active members over the past decade. Advice and assistance on forestry and other matters has been received from CWA, NHFT, FCS, HIE-CLU, and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the CWA membership.

Forres Community Woodlands Trust (type: private / community - empowering)

Summary

The Forres Community Woodlands Trust (FCWT) was formed in December 1999³⁹ to purchase the Muiry and Newforres Woods (16ha) located to the south east of Forres on behalf of the local community, because it was felt that this well-loved area and heavily used area of woodland was under threat of being lost permanently to housing development. It has subsequently purchased additional areas of woodland and open land, and is developing ambitious future plans in partnership with private and public sector partners.

Key points of interest:

- Forres Community Woodlands are immediately adjacent to a sizeable urban population.
- FCWT has acquired land from various private sector vendors
- FCWT has in-house forest management expertise, and used external contractors for the majority of forest operations, with some input from volunteer groups.

Background

Forres is a market town with a growing population in excess of 9,000, situated on the Moray coast, approximately 40km east of Inverness. The initial impetus for community involvement arose during the consultation process for the Moray Development Plan in 1998, when it was noted that the Muiry Wood, a popular informal recreation area on the outskirts of Forres, owned by Moray Council, was recognised only as commercial woodland, with minimal protection against development.

Local residents, concerned that the Council would sell the woods to a developer, established the Muiry Woods Community Woodland Association (MWCWA) to work in partnership with the Moray Council in the management of the woodland. It was then discovered that an adjacent woodland⁴⁰ was for sale, and again, there were concerns around loss of public access and amenity, and the sellers were contacted with regard to a sale to the community.

In September 1999, two weeks after the inaugural meeting of MWCWA, the owners of the neighbouring land offered 16 hectares to the community at the cost of £24,000, subject to the transaction being finalised by the end of the year. However, as an unincorporated association MWCWA could not own property in its own name, so a new company dedicated to the woods was required. Thus the Forres Community Woodlands Trust (FCWT), a limited company with very similar aims to those of the MWCWA was set up; the two groups existed as parallel organisations

³⁹ Registration Date: 20/12/1999, Registered charity from 09-02-2000

⁴⁰ The wood in question was originally part of the Forres Common Good Properties, sold off by Forres Town Council in 1973

until a general meeting could be held and the MWCWA dissolved and assimilated within the FCWT.

A great deal of work was required, and was carried out, by unpaid volunteers in a very limited timeframe: in addition to fundraising and the constitutional issues, a management plan had to be written, and agreed, and a pre-existing Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) agreement, dating back to 1995, which would be transferred along with the land title, had to be re-negotiated with FCS. The financial package involved a grant of £18,000 from CLU and a loan of £5,000 repayable over 12 months, leaving £1,000 which was raised locally.

In 2002, the Trust purchased the Sanquhar Woods (47ha), an area of highly attractive and well used mature woodland, situated immediately to the south of Forres. Funding for this acquisition came from the Scottish Land Fund, SNH and substantial private donations. More recently the Trust have acquired 2.5ha of open land (a small field in the middle of the woods) from Altyre estate, and it has aspirations to acquire additional small parcels to unify and rationalize its holdings and enhance development opportunities.

How it works

Membership of FCWT (currently c. 150) is open to residents of Forres⁴¹: a relatively small area geographically, but one with a large population: estimates are in the range 9000-9500.

The FCWT Board is elected by the membership. As with most groups a proportion of Directors must stand down each year, but may stand again. Directors meet quarterly.

A number of consultation exercises have been carried out, with public displays and drop-in days in the town. These have included a formal public Participatory Forest Appraisal carried out in Forres (2002/03), which informed the Sanquhar Woodlands Development Plan (2003); a joint community consultation at Applegrove Primary School in March 2009 in partnership with Transition Towns Forres and the Moray Council as part of its Open Space Strategy consultation process; and a more recent consultation on the future of all of Forres's woodlands and proposals for a "Woodland Centre" to be established in the woods.

The Trust is conscious that more regular, on-going communication with the membership and the wider Forres public has not always been a strongpoint: a website is under development but has been subject to considerable delay, and there has been only limited use of newsletters.

The Trust has benefitted from having a range of forest management and consultancy skills available on the Board, which has removed the need for outside professional assistance. However, other than short term "animateur" posts early in the group's history, FCWT has not employed staff directly.

⁴¹ The FCWT constitution is not LRA compliant as the geographical area is not defined by postcodes. Furthermore the LRA restricts the community right to buy to "rural" communities, currently defined as those with populations of <10,000, so there is a chance that Forres will soon be excluded in any case.

Forest operations, and the creation of recreational infrastructure, have largely been delivered by external contractors, with some input from youth groups, Forres Academy Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates, and local volunteers on a largely ad hoc basis.

Impact

As noted, most forest operations have been carried out under contract. This included a substantial thinning programme in 2007, which was managed in-house by a volunteer Director: the timber was sold standing to Gordon's of Nairn.

FCWT has carried out significant works to improve the recreational infrastructure of the woods, including car park & footpath creation, provision of all abilities access and signage and interpretation in the Muiry Woods (2001), and a pond restoration project (Autumn 2005), the construction of mountain bike trails and jumps area (Summer 2008) and a new car park (2009) in Sanquhar woods. Other activities have included facilitation of Forest School programmes and an "Enchanted Woodland" celebration event (Summer 2007).

As with many other groups, not all the Trust's aspirations and proposed projects have come to fruition. In 2011 FCWT investigated the potential for developing a "woodland centre" in Sanquhar woods, which might, amongst other uses, become the main base of a local outdoor education charity, Wild Things. Ultimately it was decided not to proceed with the project: it was unclear that it would have been financially viable, especially given the costs of access and servicing, and there appeared to be significant local concern about "development" in the woods.

The Trust is currently finalising proposals for provision of Natural Burial sites, both in the newly acquired open land and in the woods, and is in the early stages of developing an ambitious "Living Land" project in partnership with a major private landowner and possibly public sector agencies. This would involve integrated land management over both private and community owned land, with opportunities for business development, tourism, and woodland crofts, etc.

The Trust is also considering establishment of a trading subsidiary to operate as a social enterprise to take forward these future development projects. This would have the dual advantage of ensuring the Trust's operations remained within its charitable purpose, and relieving some of the pressure on the volunteer Board.

As described above, the initial impetus for community engagement in Forres was concern over the future of Council-owned woodland at Muiry. This land is still in Council ownership, and managed, notionally, in partnership with FCWT, however, the latter's input is limited. Moray Council also own several other small areas of woodland⁴² adjacent to FCWT's holdings, and there have been suggestions that their long-term management could be enhanced by transfer of ownership or management responsibility to the community trust.

⁴² Some directly, some held as Common Good land

Lessons learned

FCWT has acquired several blocks of woodland and open land from different private sector owners: these took place outwith formal mechanisms such as the Community Right to Buy or the National Forest Land Scheme, and thus came free of the rules and regulations of these schemes. However, the acquisitions were supported by a range of public and private funding sources, some of which (e.g. Scottish Land Fund) will have been tied to specific conditions and outcomes.

FCWT is unusual amongst Scottish community woodland groups in that it owns substantial areas of woodland immediately adjacent to a large settlement. These woods are rightly valued for recreation and amenity by townspeople, and this concern for the maintenance of woodland amenity was a critical driver in the establishment of the Trust and the subsequent woodland acquisitions.

However, this concern also places constraints on the Trust's activities, as elements of the local population are perceived to be strong averse to change. Communication of proposals and planned operations with such a large and urbanised population is not easy, and the Trust concedes that it has not always been successful in persuading the broader community of the merits of delivering a wider range of outputs from the woodlands.

In particular there has to date been little enthusiasm for the potential of the woodlands to contribute to the economic development of the town, however, it may be that broader considerations will have an effect on public opinion in this respect. Historically, Forres has been economically buoyant, but the recent global downturn has been exacerbated locally by the closure of RAF Kinloss, and there is widespread concern for the future of the local economy: in this context it may be easier to rally support for a wider range of future operations and activities.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	Woodland owned by community company. Partnership (nominal) with Moray Council with respect to area of Council-owned woodland
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	c. 150 members. Membership open to all adult residents of Forres

2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity
2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. Consultant forester on Board
2.5 Communication and learning processes	Active engagement with other community and private sector woodland owners
2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Sustainable forest management for benefit of community. Development plans informed by community consultation. Long term forest plan
2.7 Business models	Most operations delivered by external contractors. Timber harvesting profitable but most other works supported by range of grants. Considering establishment of trading subsidiary to take forward future development projects.
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	FCWT is currently investigating large scale cooperation project with private sector landowner (Altyre Estate) and potential public sector partners.
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA. Member of Forres Groups Action.
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	Forres CWT owns c. 66 ha, includes areas of mature conifer plantation, young restock and some open ground.
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading. Substantial private donations for acquisition.

4.3 Knowledge	FCWT has a consultant forester on the Board, and other relevant skills within the Board and the wider membership. Additional support has been available from a range of other bodies: FCS, HIE/CLU, CWA, and peer support and knowledge exchange with the wider community woodland movement.
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North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd (type: private / community - empowering)

Summary

North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status⁴³. Full voting membership is restricted to adults who are on the electoral role within the Company's catchment area. NWMCWC purchased West Ardhu and Langamull woods, total area 671 hectares, from Forestry Commission Scotland through the National Forest Land Scheme.

Key points of interest:

- This was the first Community acquisition from Forestry Commission Scotland through the National Forest Land Scheme
- NWMCWC have led a major partnership project to improve timber transport infrastructure and facilitate harvesting
- NWMCWC are the first community organisation to create new woodland crofts.

Background

The North West Mull Community Woodland Group was formed in February 2005 following a public meeting in Dervaig Village Hall called to discuss the proposal to look at the feasibility of making a community bid for the purchase of the West Ardhu and Langamull woodlands from FCS, who had declared them surplus to its requirements. The meeting, attended by c. 50 local residents gave unanimous support to forming a committee and commissioning a feasibility study, which was duly undertaken and delivered in May 2005 by Margin, in association with Ian MacLennan and Nick Marshall.

There had been no pre-existing community engagement from the Forestry Commission with respect to these woodlands. Although both woods contained walking routes with bridges and waymarkers, access was poor, and limited maintenance and management had seen facilities fall into disrepair. The feasibility study reports limited use of the woods for recreation, although a popular route to Langamull beach passed through the woods, with lack of good dry access, and summer flies, cited as the main difficulties.

Nonetheless, there was concern in the community that any future private sector ownership might be accountable, and lead to further loss of amenity, and a more positive belief that community ownership of the woodland would open other opportunities, in particular, as a partial remedy to the shortage of affordable housing.

In June 2005, Forestry Commission Scotland launched the National Forest Land Scheme, to give community organisations, recognised non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and appropriate housing bodies the opportunity to buy or

⁴³ Registration Date: 11/07/2005, Registered charity from 15-05-2006

lease National Forest Land⁴⁴ where they can provide increased public benefits, and it was determined that the NWMCWC acquisition of West Ardhu and Langamull would be progressed through the new Scheme.

The community had to move quickly: the NFLS timescale for sales of Surplus Land is tight and prescriptive⁴⁵ and a second factor was the time-limited availability of funding support from the Scottish Land Fund, which closed in 2006. Although this was due to be replaced by the Big Lottery Fund's "Growing Community Assets", there was a widespread perception, in due course shown to be correct, that this fund would be less supportive of community land buyouts of this sort.

The NFLS application was submitted in January 2006, and was assessed at an Evaluation Panel meeting the following month⁴⁶. After FCS Director approval the woodlands were purchased for £343,000 with the assistance of the Scottish Land Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Robertson Trust, Hugh Fraser Foundation, significant local fundraising and an interest free loan.

How it works

Full Membership (which carries voting rights) of the Company is restricted to adults who are on the electoral role within the Company's catchment area, which is defined by postcodes, making NWMCWC Land-Reform Act-compliant, additionally both associate and junior membership are also available.

The current membership is 165 full (voting) members, plus 53 Associates and 10 juniors – this is gradually increasing. The number of adults eligible for full membership in the catchment area is approx 340.

All members of the Company are entitled to attend the annual general meeting (AGM). The AGM elects the Board of Directors which appoints the officers (Chairman and Treasurer) from among their number who, along with the paid employees (1.5 FTE), carry out the management and administrative tasks of the Company.

The company can have up to 12 directors, serving for two terms of three years before standing down or for re-election.

Day to day decision making against the background of the agreed Business Plan, the Long Term Forest Design Plan and other policy agreements including monthly Board meetings is carried out by the Chairman, the Treasurer and the paid employees with ratification at a subsequent Board meeting if required.

⁴⁴ National Forest Land is the forests, woods, open land and other property owned by Scottish ministers on behalf of the nation, and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland.

⁴⁵ In part as a result of the experiences of early applicants such as NWMCWC, elements of the timescale have been eased, and there is a commitment from FCS to provide earlier warning of impending sales, to allow communities more time to prepare bids.

⁴⁶ Together with Birse Community Trust's application for Slewdrum forest, this was the first woodland acquisitions through the scheme.

All reports and minutes (subject to defined confidentiality rules) are published on the Company website⁴⁷ and on local notice boards. The Company takes part in regular meetings with similar bodies and actively engages in visits to aspiring Community woodland owners.

NWMCWC Ltd has established a subsidiary trading company: North West Mull Community Woodland Trading Company Limited⁴⁸, a company limited by shares, with the shares wholly owned by NWMCWC. The Trading Company has 2 Directors, both also Directors of the parent company. The Trading Company exists to enable activities and operations that might fall outwith the Holding company's charitable purposes.

The Company has combined Consultant input with the local requirements that were set out during the formation of the Company and during the Scoping and public consultation process on the Long Term Forest Design Plan in arriving at the current status.

A part-time administrator has been employed since 2006, and a full-time development manager since 2008, to support the community and bring in funding and planning applications.

Impact

NWMCWC own and manage two woodland areas. Langamull covers 250.83ha, including 170ha of Sitka spruce planted 1963, 17ha Japanese larch, 20 ha Lodgepole pine, 11 ha broadleaves, with the remaining 32 ha being open ground. West Ardhu is considerably larger, at 440.24 ha, but with a much greater proportion of open land: again Sitka is the dominant conifer 117ha, with 11ha of Japanese larch and 34 ha Lodgepole pine, plus significant areas (c. 50ha) of native woodland scattered across the site.

These woods presented a considerable challenge for conventional forest management, both in terms of the distance from conventional timber markets and the lack of appropriate transport infrastructure to facilitate extraction and delivery to mills: indeed these are seen as the main reason that FCS were keen to dispose of these woods. The NFLS valuation report compiled by the District Valuer is instructive, after noting the poor quality of fencing, the lack of internal roading and the relatively small areas of productive timber, he notes the key issue:

“Given the difficulties which would be encountered in harvesting the timber, not least because of the likely enforcement of 5 tonne weight limits on the adjoining public road, it is unlikely that this plantation would be of interest to the commercial timber market and indeed in current circumstances much of it might be cut to waste”

⁴⁷ <http://www.nwmullwoodland.co.uk/>

⁴⁸ Registration Date: 25/09/2006

Whilst the pre-acquisition feasibility study presented a relatively optimistic picture of the opportunities for managing and developing the woodlands, post-acquisition it became clear that there were significant logistical hurdles to surmount.

A key focus of initial management was increasing the sense of community ownership. Children at the Ulva Ferry and Dervaig schools produced artwork that was incorporated in signage at the woodlands, celebrations were held to mark the installation of the signs, and then forest schools activities were inaugurated in the woods. The Company also began cutting timber and distributing firewood locally, and purchased (jointly with other local landowners) a Woodmizer sawmill.

The Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP) finalised in 2009, covers twenty years, during which the company will double the areas of broadleaf trees, slightly increase the commercially viable Sitka Spruce area, add 30% to the open space and significantly expand the Riparian zones and wildlife corridors. The plan is subject to regular review as needed to comply with changing community, business and legislative requirements.

At acquisition, the West Ardhu and Langamull woods were effectively “landlocked” due to weight restrictions on the surrounding roads and bridges. A key development for community management of the forest was the establishment of a timber road: this was developed as a partnership between the Community Woodland Company, Forest Enterprise Scotland and Argyll and Bute Council, and was funded through the Scottish Strategic Timber Transport Fund (SSTTF)⁴⁹. The project, which involved upgrading a section of the C46 and the upgrading or new construction of 4 bridges and 16.5km of forest road within and outside the community woodlands, links up with the Forestry Commission road network, and was completed in summer 2011.

NWMCWC has become the first community landowner to create new woodland crofts⁵⁰, having created and allocated 9 woodland crofts in Langamull wood. The croft contract requires that crofters must agree a management plan for their croft with NWMCWC and must manage their crofts in accordance with the NWMCWC Long Term Forest Design Plan. Standing timber on the croft will remain the property of the NWMCWC until the crofter wishes to fell it, at which point it will be purchased by the crofter at a valuation agreed between the crofter and the company.

Crofters are allowed to build a house on the croft without decrofting. This is treated as an improvement and if the tenancy is renounced or terminated the crofter will be compensated for it. If the Crofter wishes to decroft and buy the house site NWMCWC will permit decrofting and purchase of the house and garden ground only if a burden is imposed in the title deed that will allow the company pre-emption on any proposed sale at a reduced price that reflects the initial subsidy provided by allowing the de-crofting of the site. The burden will include a provision that the Croft house can only be occupied in conjunction with the tenancy and management of the croft.

⁴⁹ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/STTF>

⁵⁰ <http://www.communitywoods.org/development-details.php?id=2>

The woodland croft opportunity was advertised locally and across the island and all interested parties were invited to an open meeting to register their interest. Those present were asked to prepare a very brief summary of their proposed croft use and submit them by a specific date. The initial plan had been for 8 crofts of 4ha each, and the company received 9 applications, 2 of which only wanted 2ha, so all were able to be accommodated.

The allocation of individual crofts to crofters was carried out by providing each crofter with a map of the possible croft area extending to about 50 hectares and asked them to work with others and to mark the centre of the area they preferred. The system worked well and there were no significant issues or disagreements. With some judicious line drawing a layout was mapped ensuring that with one exception each croft had at least one boundary shared with another croft, resulting in a compact structure allowing for easy road access.

Lessons learned

NWMCWC's purchase of West Ardhru and Langamull woods was the first Community acquisition from Forestry Commission Scotland through the National Forest Land Scheme. At the time the scheme was new and untested, there was limited support in place for applicants, and further pressure was caused by the time-limited availability of financial support from the Scottish Land Fund.

Since 2006 NFLS procedures have been amended (e.g. better pre-warning of FCS land and property sales⁵¹ and an extended timeframe to complete the sale), and additional support for applicants provided, both during the application process, and post-acquisition, in part as a consequence of NWMCWC's experiences.

As the District Valuer's report demonstrates, the West Ardhru and Langamull woods were perceived as having little if any commercial value or even future as woodland. Six years on, under community management and with considerable investment, the woods are back in active management and there is a very different perception of their value. NWMCWC have demonstrated that community land owners, with the right support and partners, can deliver on the difficult tasks at the difficult sites.

A second problematic area pioneered by NWMCWC is woodland crofts: it seems likely that a number of other community groups will follow Mull's lead and establish new crofts in the coming years. The National Forest Land Scheme does now include provision for groups to acquire land for the purposes of creating woodland crofts, as a single process, but this was not available at the time of NWMCWC's acquisition.

However, it appears that the two-stage process used by NWMCWC has significant benefits: there are a number of practical issues with using the "Land for Woodland Crofts" section of the NFLS⁵², and it seems probable that future groups will seek to

⁵¹ When FCS decides to sell land or property that is considered surplus to requirements, appropriate community organisations are given a (time-limited) opportunity to attempt to acquire the asset through the NFLS. Details of the process and timescales of this and other element of the NFLS are contained in the guidance notes available from <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-66re5j>

⁵² E.g. only landowners can apply to the Crofting Commission to create new crofts, nor can long term forest plans be approved until after acquisition.

follow NWMCWC's lead. One crucial feature of the process on Mull was the inclusion of forest management clauses in the croft tenancy contract: this commits crofters to manage their crofts in accordance with the wider forest management plan (and removes the Crofting Commission from any role as regulator of forest management) which is seen as essential for the community company to deliver on its statutory obligations.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	Woodland owned by community company
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, UKWAS accreditation, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	165 Members. Full Membership is free and open to all adult residents of NW Mull (defined by postcodes). Juniors and non-residents can become associate, non-voting members.
2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity
2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. NWMCWC employ Development Manager
2.5 Communication and learning processes	Reports and minutes published. Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners
2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Sustainable forest management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan
2.7 Business models	Various models for different projects.

	Subsidiary Trading Company Limited by Shares. Joint Venture for housing project. Open Book contract for Haul Route construction, harvesting and transport of timber. Forest operations by external contractors
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	NWMCWC works closely with a range of Scottish Government agencies and other bodies
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA, Development Trusts Association Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, Community Land Scotland, Confor
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	NWMCWC owns 671 ha (conifer plantation: Lodgepole Pine, Sitka Spruce) in two blocks
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, Scottish Government, Local Government, Charitable Trusts, Income from trading
4.3 Knowledge	MWMCWC employs a Development Manager to deliver funding and planning applications and to oversee forestry and other operational contract works. The Board and the active membership is building up a body of knowledge and experience, and has received valuable input, advice and assistance on forestry and other matters from Consultants, FCS, HIE-CLU, CWA and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the community woodland movement.

Sunart Oakwoods Initiative (type: public/private/collaborative)

Summary

The Sunart Oakwoods Initiative (SOI), initiated in 1996, is a major landscape-scale partnership project, which aims to restore and expand the native woodlands of the wider Sunart area, to bring local conservation, economic and amenity benefits. It involves a number of partner agencies, landowners and the local communities, and covers an area of the West Highlands encompassing the peninsulas of Moidart, Ardgour, Morvern and Ardnamurchan. While this area is not extensively covered in native woodland, the project aims to increase the range of woodland in this area, improve the conservation value of the area and maximise the rural development benefits arising from the woodlands⁵³.

Key points of interest:

- The project started from a core around Loch Sunart Special Area of Conservation and expanded successfully to include neighbouring peninsulas. A significant factor in the success of this approach was the decentralised staffing structure, resulting in activities being well tailored to local priorities and sensitivities.
- Through its steering group, made up of community, private and public sector interests, the project created a unique forum for integrating the area's land use with rural development and cultural heritage in a series of EU-funded cross-sectoral projects. Establishing strong working relationships between owners, managers, contractors, community groups and others was key.
- The project provides an alternative approach to large-scale community buy out of forest land for rural development purposes but requires strong 'buy in' from public agencies. With recent cutbacks in agency capacity and their reduced participation, it is noteworthy that community groups are revisiting woodland buy out as an option.

Background

Following the Rio conference in 1992, global interest in forestry and biodiversity was at an all-time high. The Lochaber District of Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) was at this time considering options for the conifer-native woodland mosaic that FCS manages along the north shore of Loch Sunart. The remote and disconnected conifer blocks were commercially challenging and a sale to the private sector was the favoured option. However, the international importance of these Atlantic Oakwoods as an ecological and cultural resource was at this time just becoming recognised. The harvesting of the now mature conifer stands planted on Ancient Woodland sites also provided a catalyst for native woodland restoration activity. A bold move by FCS and agency partners averted a sale and led to the woodlands being retained in public ownership.

⁵³ Bryan A., Worrell R. and MacPhail I. (2004) Sunart Oakwoods Initiative Strategy 2005-2015. Aigas Associates, Beaulieu (unpublished).

A first grant for woodland restoration activities was secured in 1996 from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust. In 1998 the North Sunart Woodland Group (NoSWoG, an innovative public-private partnership with 1200 ha (now 1500 ha) under shared deer management was established with a Minute of Agreement between FCS and private oakwood owners⁵⁴. A first training project including forestry skills was launched in Ardnamurchan. Though the SOI's action focused primarily on Loch Sunart from Strontian to Glenborrodale, after 2002 it expanded considerably to include neighbouring peninsulas. This expansion was supported in 2004 by a strategic planning exercise led by external consultants familiar with the area, resulting in a ten-year strategy with five programme headings to take the SOI to 2015. The five themes are:

1. Management of Woodlands and Other Habitats
2. Adding Value to Local Forest Products
3. Education, Skills Training and Employment
4. Tourism, Interpretation and Access Development
5. Ensuring Multiple Community Benefits

The last EU funding package was completed in 2009 and agency partners agreed to hold an in-depth community consultation to direct future action and expenditure. The consultation⁵⁵ was based on the five strategic themes in the SOI strategy and its recommendations were:

- Woodland management should remain the most important activity for SOI;
- Provide support for infrastructure and policies that facilitate access to local timber for fuel and building;
- Develop a multi-user long distance path network;
- Deliver practical, certificated training in woodland management skills, particularly for young people.

Following the consultation, external consultants were appointed in 2010 to deliver a business plan to take forwards these aspirations. The business plan tried to make a break with the *modus operandi* of previous grant-aided SOI projects by adopting an asset-based model of rural development. This decision was based on a number of assumptions: that (1) public funding for the environmental and social dimensions of the SOI is no longer available; (2) public funding for acquisition of medium-scale woodland holdings is available⁵⁶ and can be secured in the short-term; (3) a social enterprise model based on acquiring woodland then trading of woodland goods and services would generate sufficient financial returns to fund the access, restoration and training projects; (4) long-term delivery of renewable energy projects in the newly acquired forest holdings would help fund the environmental and social projects in the short-term.

The business plan's laudable long-term focus on community forests and renewable energy unfortunately failed to deliver any realistic solution to the short-term need for project activity to sustain the local interest in the SOI. It also evidenced a lack of understanding of the marginal nature of forest economics. Indeed, there is no model

⁵⁴ A joint management plan was launched in 2003

⁵⁵ MacIntyre R. and Taylor H. (2010) Public Consultation on the Future of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative. Rough Bounds, Strontian (unpublished).

⁵⁶ A new Scottish Land Fund has been widely campaigned for but will not be available until later in 2012

in the Highlands' community woodland sector of environmental and social activity being financed solely on the back of sale of woodland goods and services, desirable though it may be to reduce dependence on grant support.

The SOI left the CWA in February 2012⁵⁷, and activity has been reduced to occasional steering group meetings. However, the principal local actors remain committed to its objectives and there is strong community support for its five strategic themes.

How it works

The SOI agency partners are the Highland Council, FCS, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE). West Highland College (part of the University of the Highlands and Islands) has also been a contributing partner. These agencies are represented on the SOI Steering Group (SOSG) by regional managers from these agencies together with locally based staff (project officers, forest rangers). The remainder of the SOSG is composed of local woodland owners, forestry contractors, community company directors, and a representative of the FCS Conservancy with responsibility for private sector grants and licences.

The chair of the SOSG is Councillor Dr Michael Foxley (standing down in 2012), a resident of the SOI area, a Highland councillor since 1986, and currently leader of the Highland Council. Dr Foxley has been the architect and driving force of the SOI since its beginning. Combined with the strong commitment from managers at FCS, HIE and SNH, the SOI was able to open new ground in terms of partnership funding, such as preparing complex EU funded projects involving both public and private owners, with FCS District managers working alongside FCS Conservancy staff.

SOI lacks a formal constitution, and is unable to make applications for funding directly. Dr Foxley and some community interests were opposed to formally constituting for several reasons, the principal being that the informal arrangement worked well and a change was therefore unnecessary. This informality was seen as a strength as the 'secretariat' function could rotate between agency partners, with individual agencies taking the lead on particular funding applications, administering staff and projects 'in house', avoiding the need for a new body with insurance, line management responsibilities, etc. Each application factored in funding for a project staff to support regional managers in delivery and claim processes. The FCS District managed the lion's share of the projects but this partly reflects the scale of its forest holdings in the SOI area. Since the end of EU projects in 2009, the Highland Council's regional manager has assumed the secretariat function but without project officer support.

Ownership of the SAC Atlantic Oakwoods in the SOI area is split between private and public sectors, with the majority being in private ownership on medium to large estates. A number of relatively small ownerships of Oakwoods also exist, for example on the north shore of Loch Sunart (NoSWOG) and at Rhemore in Morvern. The bulk of conifer plantations are in public ownership, including most of the Ancient Woodland sites in need of restoration. The community woodland sector is poorly

⁵⁷ This was communicated by FCS staff, no reason was given.

developed in terms of owning or controlling land, other than the Treslaig and Achaphubuil Crofters Woodland buy out that preceded the SOI in 1994, and a number of crofter forestry schemes.

The SOI has been discussing formation of a company structure to enable it to take ownership of land (and take the lead on grant-aided projects) but the process has been delayed, in part by a perceived lack of community engagement and lack of clarity about a new SOI-wide company's function. Community development companies are active in most of the area's communities and a new SOI company would need to be complementary to these.

Impact

Since its inception, the SOI has levered approximately £4 million of direct investment into the woodlands and communities of Moidart, Ardgour, Morvern and Ardnamurchan. Funding has come principally from public agencies match-funded with EU funding (EAGGF). The SOI has delivered:

- 2000 ha of woodland restoration;
- 4000 ha of native woodland expansion;
- 13km of access improvements, including new paths and associated interpretation;
- Gateway signage and interpretation at entry points to the area;
- New wet weather facilities including two woodland shelters and a wildlife hide;
- Environmental education programmes for local schools;
- Over 350 training and employment opportunities in woodland skills;
- A transnational training and exchange project with the Garda and Valsabbia regions of northern Italy.

The SOI also delivered a range of less tangible outcomes in terms of: community confidence and cohesion; an improved ability to negotiate with regional government; revitalised interest in woodland heritage, outdoor recreation and forest products; a greater national and international appreciation of the area's environmental value; development of a locally based woodland contracting capability (traditionally an itinerant sector); an innovative approach to landscape-scale woodland restoration and management.

Lessons learned

It is widely agreed that the cultural change that the SOI has initiated will take several generations to bear fruit. A Scandinavian model of woodland utilisation is a long-term project for an area like SOI given its industrial forestry landscape, land ownership structure⁵⁸, and limited modern-day woodland culture.

The SOI model is transferable to other mountain areas of high environmental value in Scotland but requires long-term public agency staff support and receptive communities. Similar woodland restoration programmes have often been short-lived

⁵⁸ The concentrated ownership of forest land is a latent issue that the SOI has not addressed but will probably rise up the agenda here as elsewhere in Scotland. See A. Wightman (2012) Forest Ownership in Scotland at www.forestpolicy.org

and geographically restricted without the rootedness in local communities and the landscape-scale approach.

The governance structure of the SOI, led by a strong and visionary chair, has been both its strength and its principal weakness. The ability for individual partners to manage staffing and projects within their existing institutional set up was an advantage; but the lack of formal structure and secretariat (e.g. a FTE staff co-funded by the partners to develop and fund-raise for future projects) has meant the project did not maintain momentum after 2009, at a time when public sector cutbacks reduced available funding and management capacity, and other priorities absorbed key actors' attention.

The employment of SOI staff in different organisations with different regional and outstation offices reduced the ability of the staff to feel part of a coherent team though the individuals involved made efforts to transcend these differences. Though desirable, a centralised office space and stronger SOI staff identity would have been a more costly option and could have reduced the important connection with regional agency managers, whose enthusiasm has been key to securing high levels of public funding and maintaining continuity between project cycles.

Profile

1. Institutional context	
1.1 Ownership	SOI does not own or lease any land, but works with both Public and Private sector owners
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Public and private sector owners control timber and other resources
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard. Various site designations including SAC and SSSI
2. Internal organisation	
2.1 Community members	No formal body to be a member of. Membership of the SOSG is informal but at any one time 25-30 individuals would be included in email circulars. The SOSG generally has 15-20 attendees at its 3-4 meetings/annum with a half to two-thirds attending from the public sector.
2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Informal Partnership, no legal structure or personality
2.3 Representation	No formal process for community representation

2.4 Participation in decision making	Management by Steering Groups. Meeting format is open with an emphasis on consensual decision-making. . Individual EU funded projects usually developed a project-specific steering group with a subset of steering group members
2.5 Communication and learning processes	Website. Minutes of meetings publicly available. Following the 2009 consultation, four sub-groups were formed to develop the training, Rhododendron eradication, long-distance path, and timber & woodfuel projects, chaired by a combination of local community, contractor and public sector. The sub-groups fed into the business planning exercise and several are on-going.
2.6 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	Restoration of Atlantic Oakwoods, often incorporating removal of conifers. Increasing rural development benefits from woodlands. Long term forest plans for private owners. Forest Design Plans for FCS
2.7 Business models	Various grant funded projects and initiatives, led by public sector agency partners and delivered by public sector staff and external contractors. SOI not constituted so unable to apply for funding or carry out projects in its own right
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	N/a
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	Through the SOI, the Morvern Community Woodlands Company developed a 25-year partnership agreement over 8 ha Achnaha Community Wood, the NoSWoG developed a shared management plan and funding applications for 1200 ha of woodland and open ground, and the Acharacle Community Company has established the Sgoil na Coille shelter, compost toilet and composting facility on FCS-managed land. Two woodland contractors have developed yards on FCS-managed land in Morvern and Ardnamurchan. The SOI also played a peripheral role in initiating an affordable housing development with the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust in Ardnamurchan.

3.2 Associations	Member of CWA (until 2012)
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest	SOI does not own or lease any land, but works with both Public and Private sector landowners. The SOI levered in £4 million to the SOI area from 1996-2009. The individual projects employed up to 3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) at any one time though 1-2 staff FTEs was the norm. Additional project support was provided by the Highland Council Ranger, particularly for access and education projects. The SOI operated from FCS offices (outstations) in Strontian and Lochaline, with occasional working at regional hubs in Fort William and Oban
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, Scottish Government, Local Government, EU international cooperation projects
4.3 Knowledge	There has been a wide range of expertise available within Agency partners (FCS, SNH, HIE) and Highland Council, and amongst the private sector forest owners and contractors involved in the steering group Other sources of input and information have included consultants and the wider community woodland movement.

Discussion and Conclusions

What did we learn about Scottish community woodlands from using the framework?

The framework proved a useful device for illustrating and comparing a number of aspects of Scottish community woodland structure and practice. The profile table enumerated the significant common structural features of many Scottish community woodlands, whilst the discursive chapters provided the opportunity to explore the individual circumstances and experiences of the groups studied.

In particular, the descriptive sections were well suited to recording the individual characteristics of the groups, both in terms of history and background (the preservation of the narrative of where groups came from, and why they started, is an important element of group cohesion), and in detailing both the considerable variations in activities and operations, and the divergent ways in which these operations are delivered.

A particularly notable point of difference is in the various ways the community groups studied have “bought” forestry knowledge and expertise, and organised their woodland management operations. All recognised that specialist forestry knowledge was required, but they found very different ways to obtain it: Abriachan engaged a forest management consultant on contract, DFT employed a forester directly, NW Mull employed a development manager to oversee forest contractors, whilst Forres have been fortunate to have a forestry consultant on the Board.

As noted above, the company limited by guarantee with charitable status has emerged as the standard model for community woodland groups, a standardisation encouraged both by peer exchange (sharing of constitutions) and by the requirements of funders and regulators, which are perceived to have becoming more demanding and prescriptive over time.

One interesting illustration of this phenomenon is that although five of the groups are well established community landowners, only one, North West Mull, has a constitution which complies with the Land Reform Act, which requires the geographical definition of the community in terms of postcodes.

Prior to the Land Reform Act a variety of geographical units had been used: parish and community council boundaries were probably the most common, but CWA isn't aware of any community woodland groups that defined their area by means of postcodes before 2003.

The use of postcodes in this way is a relatively minor issue, but it does illustrate a number of differences in perspective between participants. Firstly, the use of an essentially bureaucratic and non-intuitive specification is perceived within the community sector as “top-down” and disempowering⁵⁹; secondly, as the organisations involved are charities (and thus non-profit-distributing) and committed

⁵⁹ Self-definition being a cornerstone of empowerment

to public benefit objectives, it's not entirely clear why eligibility for membership needs to be so rigorously policed.

More generally, there is a perception within the community woodland sector that regulators place too much emphasis on governance structures, and not enough on delivery of the objectives of community forestry. In contrast, there is an understandable tendency within community woodland groups to focus on outcomes and regard governance structures as simply a means to an end: "we need to be a company in order to own land / get grants, etc." Involvement in community woodlands is voluntary, and those who do get involved are generally motivated by the opportunity to deliver positive outcomes: few if any are there because of their enthusiasm to run a company or a charity.

Compilation of these case studies using the framework illustrated two important features of Scottish community woodland groups: their independence and their connectedness.

Five of the six groups studied are incorporated, independent and self-governing: although all are subject to various regulatory processes and their operations may be constrained by the availability of grants to support non-economic operations, they are empowered to determine their own policies, aims and objectives, and to control the management of their operations. This is typical of Scottish community woodlands, many of which have adopted the charitable company limited by guarantee form: even in situations where the community group does not (yet) own or lease woodland, the community members "own" and are committed to the group.

In contrast, where community engagement and involvement is taken forward through unincorporated organisations or partnerships, commitment can wax and wane with the interests of individuals, especially when they are representing statutory partners, and the activities and operations of the partnership can be constrained by changes in policy within the partner bodies: for example it is perceived that changes in FCS procurement rules have inhibited the ability of FCS districts to support local rural development initiatives.

Whilst individual Scottish community woodland groups have a high degree of independence, they are also very well-connected. All five of the incorporated groups are members of the Community Woodlands Association, established by its member groups in 2003 to support, network and represent the sector. CWA holds an annual conference, runs a training programme for members of community groups, produces regular newsletters and information bulletins and hosts an e-group for members.

Partly as a result of personal contacts made through conferences and training events, there is a significant amount of peer networking and direct contact between groups. This networking has enabled the development of a strong consciousness amongst individual groups of being part of a wider community woodland movement; it has also had practical implications, as the mutual sharing of constitutions, business plans and funding applications not only strengthens individual groups but encourages standardisation of structure and practice.

What did we learn about the framework from using it to understand community woodlands?

The production of the six case studies, and the completion of the profile tables, was an opportunity to test the usefulness of the framework, especially given the degree of commonality between the groups being studied.

Further comparison between these 6 case studies and the now considerable number of other case studies produced elsewhere, suggests that there are three key areas where the use of the framework needs care, and potentially, further refinement.

- National regulations and international comparisons
- Context, scale and complexity of the case study subject
- Subjectivity and interpretation of the subheadings

The information recorded in the profile table under some subheadings may well be determined by national legislation, and care is needed when making international comparisons. In such cases the information recorded is setting a national context, rather than illustrating a group's preferences or objectives.

An example of this is "1.2 Access". In Scotland part 1 of the Land Reform Scotland Act 2003 established rights of responsible access, so except in very specific circumstances it is not in the power of landowners, whether community or otherwise, to limit (or permit) access. Similarly in Sweden *allemannsrätten* (*everyman's right*) to access nature is constitutionally guaranteed.

So whilst the information recorded under the "access" subheading reveals interesting differences between the various English and Welsh case studies, it says almost nothing at all with respect to the Scottish cases, and is of limited use in comparing an English and Scottish case.

It is apparent that community forestry projects and organisations vary greatly in terms of scale (size and time), objectives, extent of empowerment etc., and complex typologies of community forestry may be constructed around these characteristics.

Inevitably, the profile table is easier to complete satisfactorily the simpler and more straightforward the object of the case study, as the "type" of community woodland group affects the "sense" of the information recorded the profile table subheadings; in particular the difference in context between externally-led community involvement projects and community-led woodland ownership organisations is reflected in much greater complexity of the information to be recorded, and a much greater likelihood of incompleteness.

The subheading "4.3 Knowledge" provides a useful example of the first point. Most of the case studies compiled elsewhere have concentrated on "forestry" knowledge, but this comprises only a small part of the body of knowledge necessary for larger scale community ownership (and, moreover, is one that can very easily be bought in from the private sector).

In addition, community woodland owners need to develop knowledge in business and project management, governance, promotion and public relations, as well as the specialist skills required to develop and deliver the health and education programmes undertaken by Abriachan and Dunnet, or to take forward woodland crofts as NW Mull have done.

The second point is illustrated by “4.2 Funding sources”, which demonstrates the very substantial difference between the funding arrangements for a standalone partnership project, which can be a single package, and relatively simple (albeit with some very big numbers), such as that recorded for Neroche:

Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership programme grant of £2,000,000.

In addition Partnership funding totalled £945,000

Total cost of the programme £2,945,000

And that reporting the complex funding arrangements over 15 years for Abriachan Trust, where the table entry

Scotland Rural Development Programme (and precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Private sector (BP). Income from trading

is actually shorthand for a much more complex picture:

Funding for acquisition: Scottish Natural Heritage, the Rural Challenge Fund, the Highland Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, ENTRUST and British Petroleum. Funding for woodland management operations, such as restocking, thinning, biodiversity enhancement: successive forestry grant schemes: Woodland Grant Scheme, Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme, Scotland Rural Development Programme. Funding for specific projects delivering additional social economic and environmental benefits: National Lottery, European Union Northern Periphery Programme, Highland Council. Earned income from timber harvesting, firewood sales, social inclusion and health contracts, etc. Memberships, donations.

This might seem a more detailed and appropriate response: the distinction between say, funding for acquisition and funding for on-going management is useful, and could be a potential enhancement of the profile table. However it has to be recognised that the second “answer” is actually less complete or accurate than the first, as there are almost certainly some funders and funding streams omitted, and that attempting to draw any meaningful conclusions from comparison with a similar answer for one of the other case studies would be fraught: there is every chance that differences between the responses would reflect incomplete recording and/or the availability of different funds at different times.

Finally, as noted, completing the profile table demonstrated a considerable amount of commonality amongst groups. This reflected “real” features in common between

the groups studied, but was also facilitated by having a single researcher overseeing the process and completing the case studies in parallel.

Comparison with case studies produced elsewhere raised the question of whether apparent differences between the information collated for the various organisations were artefacts of the process (e.g. different researchers prioritising different elements, interviewees understanding the question differently, individual subjectivity) rather than indicative of substantive differences between organisations.

The most obvious example here was subheading “1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities”, where for the five landowning Scottish groups the standard response (augmented where relevant with reference to environmental designations, etc) was to briefly list the most important sets of regulations governing their operations:

“UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law, Health & Safety Legislation.”

It might be assumed that a broadly similar response would be appropriate for most other British case studies, however, many of these recorded very different information, to the extent that it is unclear whether they are “answering the same question”.

Coppicewood: “The college is responsible for managing the woodland.”

Longwood: “In order to comply with the Forestry Acts, the group has to manage the land in accordance with the plan agreed by FCW.”

Hill Holt: “Through contracting with agencies to deliver training HHW has statutory responsibilities to these bodies.”

Rookwood: “Much of the woodland has been subject to Tree Preservation Orders since 1964. The woodland is also within the Honiton Conservation Area.”

It should be noted that this point in particular is not made to argue about what the “correct” answer should be, or to claim that one interpretation of the subheadings was superior to another. However, it does illustrate that without substantial guidance the meaning of certain sections of the profile table is either unclear or context-sensitive, and that this would clearly limit the usefulness of these parts of the table for comparisons between groups.

These points notwithstanding, the framework appears to be a useful tool in documenting community forestry projects and organisations, and with care, can facilitate some useful comparisons within and across national boundaries.

Our use of the framework suggests that some additional guidance with respect to the profile table would be beneficial to improve the rigour of its application, but that fundamentally the model is sound.

Appendix 1: Profile Comparison Table

	Abriachan	Borders	Dunnet	Forres	NW Mull	Sunart
1. Institutional context						
1.1 Ownership	Woodland owned by community company	Mixed. BFT owns some woodlands, works with other community and private sector landowners	Main woodland area leased by community company from Scottish Natural Heritage. Small woodland area owned by community company	Woodland owned by community company. Partnership (nominal) with Moray Council with respect to area of Council-owned woodland	Woodland owned by community company	SOI does not own or lease any land, but works with both Public and Private sector owners
1.2 Access and use rights	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. BFT has timber and other rights on land it owns. BFT owns a flock of sheep at Corehead.	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber resources managed by community company according to management and lease agreements with	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Timber and other resources managed by community company	Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) guaranteed by Land Reform Act. Public and private sector owners control timber and other resources

			landowner (SNH)			
1.3 Regulations / statutory responsibilities	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation. Area includes sites designated as SSSI	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation. Main forest is part of SSSI	UK Forest Standard, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.	UK Forest Standard, UKWAS accreditation, Company Law, Charity Law. Health & Safety Legislation.	UK Forest Standard. Various site designations including SAC and SSSI
2. Internal organisation						
2.1 Community members	c. 70 members. Membership is open to all adult residents of parish. Those not eligible for full membership can become "Friends of Abriachan Forest" for £5 / year (individuals) £7.50 / year (households)	BFT has > 700 Members, in a range of membership categories. Individual membership is £20/year	c. 550 members. Membership open to all adult residents of Caithness	c. 150 members. Membership open to all adult residents of Forres	165 Members. Full Membership is free and open to all adult residents of NW Mull (defined by postcodes). Juniors and non-residents can become associate, non-voting members.	No formal body to be a member of. Membership of the SOSG is informal but at any one time 25-30 individuals would be included in email circulars. The SOSG generally has 15-20 attendees at its 3-4 meetings/annum with a half to two-thirds attending from the public sector.

2.2 Structure / legal status / financial structures	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity	Company Limited by Guarantee, Charity	Informal Partnership, no legal structure or personality
2.3 Representation	Members nominate and elect Company Directors	Members nominate and elect Company Directors	Members nominate and elect Company Directors	Members nominate and elect Company Directors	Members nominate and elect Company Directors	No formal process for community representation
2.4 Participation in decision making	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. AFT employs consultant forester (on contract basis) who advises on forest management	Decision-making by company Directors (Trustees). Members ultimately in control of decision making via election of Trustees. The Board has regular strategic reviews (e.g. latter part of last year). This involved drafting by key trustees/ members of staff and a special meeting, attended by trustees and	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. DFT employed Community Forest Manager till 2007, now Community Ranger	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. Consultant forester on Board	Decision-making by company Directors. Community ultimately in control of decision making via election of Directors. Regular consultation on projects and objectives. NWMCWC employ Development Manager	Management by Steering Groups. Meeting format is open with an emphasis on consensual decision-making. . Individual EU funded projects usually developed a project-specific steering group with a subset of steering group members

		staff. Members were not directly consulted but any feedback feeds into the discussions.				
2.5 Communication and learning processes	All members can attend monthly Directors meetings. Newsletter, Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners	Newsletter, website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners.	Three large scale community consultations since 2002. Regular Open Days in forest, and monthly log sales where Directors are present and welcome feedback. Newsletters. Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners	Active engagement with other community and private sector woodland owners	Reports and minutes published. Website. Active engagement with other community woodland owners	Website. Minutes of meetings publicly available. Following the 2009 consultation, four sub-groups were formed to develop the training, Rhododendron eradication, long-distance path, and timber & woodfuel projects, chaired by a combination of local community, contractor and public sector. The sub-groups fed into the business planning exercise and several are on-going.
2.6 Forest management	Sustainable forest	Sustainable forest	Sustainable forest	Sustainable forest	Sustainable forest	Restoration of Atlantic Oakwoods,

objectives and planning procedures	management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan	management for benefit of community. Significant-scale habitat restoration by afforestation. Long term forest plan(s)	management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan	management for benefit of community. Development plans informed by community consultation. Long term forest plan	management for benefit of community. Restructuring even aged conifer monoculture to increase species and age class diversity. Long term forest plan	often incorporating removal of conifers. Increasing rural development benefits from woodlands. Long term forest plans for private owners. Forest Design Plans for FCS
2.7 Business models	Forest management by private sector consultant forester and self-employed forest craftsman. Recent forest harvesting by standing sale. Education programmes delivered by self-employed contractors, overseen by volunteer co-ordinator.	Operations funded by grant support and fundraising. Staff team of 10. Many forest operations carried out by contractors and volunteers	Most forest operations carried out by directly employed staff & volunteers.	Most operations delivered by external contractors. Timber harvesting profitable but most other works supported by range of grants. Considering establishment of trading subsidiary to take forward future development projects.	Various models for different projects. Subsidiary Trading Company Limited by Shares. Joint Venture for housing project. Open Book contract for Haul Route construction, harvesting and transport of timber. Forest operations by external contractors	Various grant funded projects and initiatives, led by public sector agency partners and delivered by public sector staff and external contractors. SOI not constituted so unable to apply for funding or carry out projects in its own right

2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.	Non-profit distributing as per charity rules.	N/a
3. External linkages						
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	Management agreement with SNH re SSSI management. Northern Woodheat NPP Project: an EU Interreg project (through the Northern Periphery Programme) led by Highland Birchwoods investigating small and medium scale woodfuel supply chains. CWA Employability Services Project: A LEADER project led by CWA supporting community	BFT is part of the Southern Upland Partnership, and is involved in the Working Countryside Group, and the Borders Treefest group. It is a partner of the Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy Group. BFT also maintains links with other environmental NGOs engaged in habitat restoration: Trees for Life, John Muir Trust, RSPB etc.	Strong relationship with Dounreay - annual volunteer week with Dounreay apprentices. DFT works closely with SNH and a range of other bodies. Northern Woodheat NPP Project: an EU Interreg project (through the Northern Periphery Programme) led by Highland Birchwoods investigating small and medium scale woodfuel supply	FCWT is currently investigating large scale cooperation project with private sector landowner (Altyre Estate) and potential public sector partners.	NWMCWC works closely with a range of Scottish Government agencies and other bodies	Through the SOI, the Morvern Community Woodlands Company developed a 25-year partnership agreement over 8 ha Achnaha Community Wood, the NoSWoG developed a shared management plan and funding applications for 1200 ha of woodland and open ground, and the Acharacle Community Company has established the Sgoil na Coille shelter, compost

	woodlands to initiate employability programmes and develop as social enterprises		chains. CWA Employability Services Project: A LEADER project led by CWA supporting community woodlands to initiate employability programmes and develop as social enterprises			toilet and composting facility on FCS-managed land. Two woodland contractors have developed yards on FCS-managed land in Morvern and Ardnamurchan. The SOI also played a peripheral role in initiating an affordable housing development with the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust in Ardnamurchan.
3.2 Associations	Member of CWA	Member of CWA	Member of CWA	Member of CWA. Member of Forres Groups Action.	Member of CWA, DTAS, CES, CLS, Confor	Member of CWA (until 2012)
4. Resources						
4.1 Forest	AFT owns 534 ha: a mix of conifer plantation, predominantly	BFT owns 1500 ha land in 5 blocks, the largest being Carrifran	DFT leases 104 ha (conifer plantation: LP, MP, CP, SS), and owns a	Forres CWT owns c. 66 ha, includes areas of mature conifer plantation,	NWMCWC owns 671 ha (conifer plantation: Lodgepole Pine, Sitka Spruce) in	SOI does not own or lease any land, but works with both Public and Private sector landowners.

	Lodgepole Pine, Sitka Spruce, Scots Pine, Larch, and open hill land, plus various buildings on site	wildwood and Corehead Farm. BFT owns two office building & ancilliary shelters, which sit on rented land. Real Wood Studios rent land and main building but own their timber processing building.	small mixed woodland of 1.5 ha. DFT owns a building on its main site.	young restock and some open ground.	two blocks	The SOI levered in £4 million to the SOI area from 1996-2009. The individual projects employed up to 3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) at any one time though 1-2 staff FTEs was the norm. Additional project support was provided by the Highland Council Ranger, particularly for access and education projects. The SOI operated from FCS offices (outstations) in Strontian and Lochaline, with occasional working at regional hubs in Fort William and Oban
4.2 Funding sources	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and	Scotland Rural Development Programme (and

	precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Private sector (BP). Income from trading	precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading, Significant public fundraising for acquisitions.	precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading, Charitable Trusts	precursors), National Lottery, EU, Scottish Government, Local Government, Income from trading. Substantial private donations for acquisition.	precursors), National Lottery, Scottish Government, Local Government, Charitable Trusts, Income from trading	precursors), National Lottery, Scottish Government, Local Government, EU international cooperation projects
4.3 Knowledge	AFT employ a professional forest management consultant, and have sought advice on forestry and other matters from other bodies: FCS, CWA, HIE-CLU, etc, and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the CWA membership. Members of the	BFT have a (relatively) large and skilled staff team, and considerable expertise of community forestry, fundraising and business management within the Board of Trustees. BFT also shares information and knowledge with a range of other organisations, such as FCS,	DFT employed a community forest manager 2003-7, and have subsequently employed forest workers and a community forest ranger. A considerable body of expertise has been built up within the Board and the active members over the past decade. Advice and	FCWT has a consultant forester on the Board, and other relevant skills within the Board and the wider membership. Additional support has been available from a range of other bodies: FCS, HIE/CLU, CWA, and peer support and knowledge exchange with the wider	MWMCWC employs a Development Manager to deliver funding and planning applications and to oversee forestry and other operational contract works. The Board and the active membership is building up a body of knowledge and experience, and has received	There has been a wide range of expertise available within Agency partners (FCS, SNH, HIE) and Highland Council, and amongst the private sector forest owners and contractors involved in the steering group. Other sources of input and information have included consultants and the wider

	<p>community have developed considerable knowledge and expertise over the 15 years of AFT's existence, not only of forest management, but of a wide range of activities and operations, most notably in developing pioneering forest education with a range of young and adult client groups.</p>	<p>CWA, and other environmental NGOs engaged in habitat restoration.</p>	<p>assistance on forestry and other matters has been received from CWA, NHFT, FCS, HIE-CLU, and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the CWA membership.</p>	<p>community woodland movement.</p>	<p>valuable input, advice and assistance on forestry and other matters from Consultants, FCS, HIE-CLU, CWA and from peer support and knowledge exchange within the community woodland movement.</p>	<p>community woodland movement.</p>
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Appendix 2: List of Abbreviations

AFT	Abriachan Forest Trust
BFT	Borders Forest Trust
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
CLU	Community Land Unit
CR2B	Community Right to Buy
CWA	Community Woodlands Association
DFT	Dunnet Forestry Trust
EU	European Union
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
FR	Forest Research
HIE	Highlands and Island Enterprise
IPF	Independent Panel on Forestry
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale, trans: 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'
LRA	Land Reform Act
NFLS	National Forest Land Scheme
NHFT	North Highland Forest Trust
NHS	National Health Service
NPP	Northern Periphery Programme
NWNCWC	North West Mull Community Woodland Company
OSCR	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SOI	Sunart Oakwoods Initiative
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest