Forest Research

A review of the Forest Education Initiative in Britain

Forest Education Initiative

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Contents

Executive summary

The Forest Education Initiative **(FEI) was created 19 years ago** in 1992. The FEI is a partnership of a broad range of bodies including civil society organisations, government organisations, and the forestry and education sectors.

The aims of FEI are to:

> *Increase the understanding and appreciation, particularly among young people, of the environmental, social, and economic potential of trees, woodlands and forests and of the link between the tree and everyday wood products.* (FEI website, 2010)

From a beginning of one cluster group **FEI now operates through a network in late 2010 of 80** (38 in England, 20 in Scotland and 22 in Wales) **cluster groups across Great Britain (GB).** Within these groups individuals and organisations who want to educate others in woodlands and about trees and woods and related industries are brought together with those who are directly involved with woodland ownership or management.

This review looks at the history and development of FEI, its governance structure, funding procedures and the activities and members of the cluster groups. The research undertaken for the review has included analysis of documents, a range of interviews and a survey of cluster groups and provides an analysis of the strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities of FEI.

Key findings

Governance

- The **Forestry Commission (FC)** in England, Scotland and Wales **is the main driver and partner** of FEI.
- **At least 245 partners have been involved in FEI Partnership funded activities** from 2003-2009.[1] Approximately 182 of these were individual organisations; this figure includes about 24 different local authorities.
- **FEI reaches schools, communities and teachers** through its partnership network.

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[1] This is based on an analysis of 66 FEI partnership funded project reports (the authors gained access to) out of 139 projects funded in this period. Therefore potentially many more partners would have been identified if all the project reports had been completed.

- There is involvement in FEI by organisations that manage or use the natural environment for amenity, environmental or enterprise reasons.
- **Educational and national/local government organisations** are the most **common lead organisations** for partnership funded projects. National/local government organisations and charities were the most common partner organisation for partnership projects.
- The cluster groups are supported by a steering group each in England, Scotland and Wales and three national FEI coordinators in Britain.
- The cluster groups appear to work most effectively and with continuity when members are able to **incorporate some of their FEI activities into their work roles and/or have good support from coordinators**.

Funding

- FEI **awarded funds of approximately £442,806[2] between 2003 and 2009.** Every £1 awarded by FEI is at least match funded and is sometimes exceeded by funds and resources from other sources.**[3]**
- For example in 2009 a significant **£595,000[4] match funding was, unusually, leveraged with support from £56,500 of FEI Partnership funding**.
- Many funding bids for forest education activity **require a local network, partners and a system for working with schools and communities. This is primarily the purpose and role of FEI.**
- **At the GB level charities, private organisations and government, both local authority and national,** were the most common source of matched funds.

Cluster groups

- **Cluster group numbers and membership of FEI as well as numbers of partners have all increased** in recent years.
- The **total number of participants** involved in FEI activities across GB in 2009 was estimated to be 14,776.
- An estimated **1,405 people were cluster group members** in March 2010[5], 850 in England, 335 in Wales and 220 in Scotland.
- **Average numbers of** those who are active and regularly attend cluster group meetings are estimated to be 12 per cluster group in England, 10 in Wales and 8 members per group in Scotland.

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[2] Combination of small grants up to £200 (£20,589.5, 100 small grants provided) and up to £5K grants (£422,216.79, 139 large grants provided).

[3] Those who receive a grant between £201 and £5K have to find 50% match funding.

[4] This was due to 3 large scale successful lottery bids awarded.

[5] Based on 44 cluster groups that responded to the survey.

- In terms of occupation teachers constitute the largest group within the FEI membership (approximately 35%)
- The key **types of activities** being undertaken by cluster groups included:
    1. Networking and support
    2. Forest School – delivery, training and networking
    3. FEI funded projects
    4. Training (other than Forest School).
- The **top three motivations for membership of FEI** are:
    1. Opportunities to network regionally
    2. Opportunities to access funding
    3. Support for Forest School delivery.
- **The key value of FEI as identified by members** is:
    1. Support from other members of cluster group
    2. Opportunities to apply for funding
    3. Opportunity to attend the national networking day
    4. Support and expertise from the FEI coordinators.
- On average across GB **68% of cluster group activity was estimated to be connected to Forest School** – either through training, delivery or Forest School networking (67% in England, 71% in Wales and 65% in Scotland).
- The FEI **website gets an average 12,200 visits per month** and annually approximately 146,605 visits in 2009/10.

An analysis of **strengths and weaknesses** proposes **opportunities** for the potential development of the FEI over the next few years.

Strengths

- A **key value of FEI is the flexibility of its governance structure** with coordinators and steering groups acting as an umbrella of support for cluster groups that can develop and fade depending on local need and enthusiasm.
- **FEI is a wide ranging and effective network** that supports a broad variety of people and groups (teachers, rangers, education providers, private forestry) to work with a diverse range of people in local schools and communities.
- The **range, diversity and size of cluster groups across GB** reflect local needs and interests.
- **Forest School** has provided interest in FEI and drawn new members into the network.
- **FC funding and leadership provides continuity, funding and stability for FEI.**
- The **FEI Partnership Fund provides opportunities** for cluster groups to gain funding for specific activities and projects.
- **FEI activities can take place almost anywhere**, indoors/outdoors, and activities can last for short or long periods of time.

Weakness

- There appears to be a **lack of knowledge and understanding of what FEI is** both internally within the cluster groups and amongst partner organisations and externally with other organisations and the wider public.
- Lack of active engagement from national partners and supporting organisations.
- Lack of well designed monitoring and evaluation means that key activities and achievements of FEI are not fully captured.
- There is **debate about the relationship between Forest School** and FEI – key issues include the fact that the Forest School appears to be more widely known and recognised than FEI.
- Potential dominance of Forest School activities as part of FEI delivery.
- Activities/projects within FEI are **not always clearly labelled** and the network loses out on gaining greater recognition.

Opportunities

- **Publicise the activities and benefits of FEI to the forestry sector** with a focus on encouraging organisations to develop their corporate social responsibility by getting involved.
- Produce a **clear communication strategy** to publicise FEI and strategically target and disseminate information and activity about the partnership.
- Develop an appropriate **monitoring and evaluation system** that captures the relevant activity that FEI facilitates. Identify the key data needed to publicise and outline the benefits of FEI.
- Identify potential new opportunities for cluster groups to become more **financially self sustaining.**

Threats

- **The current economic crisis may have a number of effects**, including difficulties for cluster groups to gain match funding for projects, possible reduction in members due to less flexibility in their work roles, impacts of funding cuts on public service, including Forestry Commission England, and civil society, organisations/employees.
- Confusion about the **relationship between Forest School and FEI**.
- Lack of external profile for FEI.

Recommendations

- FEI partners/members need to clarify the monitoring information they require to chart the progress of FEI. There is FEI activity taking place that is not funded by FEI and therefore information about those activities is often not collected. A simple system could be set up so that all FEI activities (not just FEI funded ones) collect data on the number of participants involved and number of contact hours.

- It should be a requirement of gaining funding from the Partnership Fund to compete a project report. With this requirement in place more accurate figures can be gained on the number of participants, amount of match funding, and number of partners involved.
- Ensure FEI activities are clearly communicated as FEI related, at present this does not always take place and opportunities are lost to make FEI more widely known nationally.
- Develop sub national networking meetings which cluster groups, often, find of greater benefit than national networking.

Introduction

The Forest Education Initiative (FEI) is a partnership between a number of forestry, environment or education focused organisations in Britain. The stated aims of the FEI are to:

> *Increase the understanding and appreciation, particularly among young people, of the environmental, social, and economic potential of trees, woodlands and forests and of the link between the tree and everyday wood products.*
> (FEI website, 2010)

Further aims are to 'encourage first hand learning opportunities', to 'increase environmental understanding', to 'promote wood as a sustainable resource' and to develop 'emotional and physical wellbeing' (FEI Annual Review 2009).

FEI operates through a network of approximately 80 cluster groups across Britain (in late 2010). Within these groups individuals and organisations who want to educate others in woodlands and about trees, woods or related industries are brought together with those who are directly involved with woodland ownership or management. The cluster groups are supported by a steering group, each, in England, Scotland and Wales and three national FEI coordinators in Britain.

1.1 The review of FEI: objectives

Forestry Commission in 2009 asked the Social and Economic Research Group[6] of Forest Research to review the history, process and activities of FEI. The objectives of the review are to:

- Document the history of FEI; why it was created and how it has developed in the years since its creation in 1992.
- Focus on the activities/aims of FEI: what activities are taking place, are the aims of FEI seen as appropriate and relevant to those involved.
- Explore the relationships between the various organisations and individuals involved (i.e. between the national steering groups, the coordinators and the cluster groups).
- Better understand the activities of the cluster groups.
- Investigate the governance and funding processes of the FEI network and projects.
- Look to the future: what are the current strengths and weaknesses of FEI and what opportunities are there for the future of the network.

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[6] SERG www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/infd-5stbz2

1.2 Policy context

There is considerable interest in the use of the outdoors as a context or focus for education and learning in England, Scotland and Wales. The three country forestry strategies outline support for education and learning in or focused on trees and woodlands (Scottish Government, 2006; Defra, 2007[7]; Welsh Assembly Government, 2009)

In Wales the Foundation Phase was introduced for children 3-7 years old and this has a focus on experiential learning with an emphasis on the use of the outdoors as illustrated by the following statement: *'children will experience activities in the outdoors where they have first hand experience of solving real life problems and learn about conservation and sustainability'* (DCELLS, 2008). 'Woodland for learning and the learning country' is Forestry Commission Wales education and learning strategy (FCW, 2007). Emphasis from the Welsh strategy is on providing quality learning experiences using woods, working with partners to influence practice and policy and acting as a facilitator to enable others to use woods for learning.

In England in 2006 the Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto was launched with the aim of promoting the benefits of going outside to support the delivery of education and learning. In 2009 the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom formed as a charity to champion the use of the outdoors for learning and take forward the aims of the manifesto including the Quality Badge Scheme[8] (CLOtC, 2010). The England forestry strategy (of the previous government) highlights the need to educate the public about the role of trees and woods in mitigating climate change, wood as a sustainable resource, and the wider environmental and ecological benefits of trees and woods. Emerging policy priorities for Forestry Commission England include the protection, improvement and expansion of the woodland resource and the range of ecosystem services (including cultural services such as education), to be achieved through a greater emphasis on enabling individuals, civil society and business to determine the range of benefits they want.

In Scotland the Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning offers opportunities for children to enjoy first hand experiences outdoors in school grounds, green space or the wider countryside (LTS, 2010). It was produced by Learning and Teaching Scotland which is a non departmental public body funded by the Scottish Government. The Woods for Learning strategy in Scotland gives priority to those who work with young people in the outdoors to use woods to enhance learning (FCS, 2009).

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[7] Previous government strategy

[8] The Quality Badge is a national accreditation scheme combining elements of provision and learning and safety.

There are a wide range of ways in which FEI partner organisations deliver education and learning opportunities. Using the example of the Forestry Commission in England, Scotland and Wales, as the main funder and driver of FEI, some of its delivery is focused on formal education and learning e.g. through curriculum based direct provision while other approaches are informal such as self led interpretive visits. These mechanisms are complimentary using different approaches to reach a range of groups. Table 1 outlines the various mechanisms and shows that FEI falls primarily within facilitation of education and learning opportunities e.g. FC in each country enables and encourages FEI activities and projects to take place with partners and cluster groups. It should be noted that FEI also fits within other approaches as well such as; resource provision and interpretation, as well as campaigns and events.

Table 1: Forestry Commission education and learning delivery (from Lovell et al. 2010)

E&L	Approach	Delivery mechanism	Examples
Direct E&L provision by FC staff	Curriculum based	Forestry Commission staff	School / university trips to woods and forests; use of forest plots; some Forest Schools
	Non-curriculum activities	Forestry Commission staff	Ranger led interpretation, e.g. fungi foray; some Forest Schools
	Skills training	Forestry Commission staff	Forest Apprenticeships; work placements; vocational training e.g. through '14-19 pathways'; Forestry Commission staff development; Forest School training
Facilitation of E&L opportunities	Partnerships	Forestry Commission staff and other educators and non-educational specialists	Forest Education Initiative; Forest Apprenticeships
	Grant schemes, funding and support	Forestry Commission grant/funding schemes, Forest Education Initiative	Woodlands In and Around Towns; Woodland Improvement Grants; Forest School Challenge Funds; FEI cluster group funded projects
	Teacher / educator support and training	Forestry Commission staff and other experts, Forest Education Initiative	Ranger visits to school; advice and support for teachers wishing to use woods and forests; Forestry Commission Wales education team support for FEI cluster groups
Resource provision	Educational materials	Forestry Commission staff, educators, users, FEI	Tree Trunk online resources
	Physical resources	Forestry Commission staff, educators, users	Use of forest research plots; use of woods and forests by forestry skills training companies; educator-led educational activities
	Online, printed, auditory or film media	Forestry Commission staff, educators, users, FEI	FC Wales factsheets e.g. Forest Machines and equipment
Interpretation	Led visits	Forestry Commission staff, other 'experts'	Fungi-forays; get to know local woodland events,
	Static or portable self-use interpretation media	Users	Leaflets; posters; guide books; audio-guides; interpretation boards in forests; interpreted trails

E&L	Approach	Delivery mechanism	Examples
Play	Provision of play opportunities	Forestry Commission staff, users, educators	Den building day; It's okay to play project; Forest School
Campaigns and events	National media	Any	Website information on events and activities in specific woodlands
	Schools	Any	'Seeds for Schools',
Non – specific E&L programmes and projects	Health	Any	Chopwell Wood Health Project
	Recreation	Any	Babes in the woods,
	Volunteering	Any	Volunteer rangers New Forest
	Community outreach	Any	Consultation processes,
	Groups such as 'Friends of…'	Any	Friends of Chopwell Wood

The new Foundation Phase approach in Wales and the Curriculum for Excellence in Outdoor Learning in Scotland provide a much stronger steer and basis for outdoor learning in these two countries and provides opportunities for FEI to become a more significant player in woodland and outdoor based education.

Forest Education: some definitions

Forest Education is about using trees, woods and forests as a learning resource in both a formal and informal context. The forest resource can be used to teach a range of curriculum subjects and also be used in the context of sustainable development education. Forest Education includes Forest School (see below for Forest School definition) but also involves many other ways of connecting children with trees and woodlands.

Sustainable development education (SDE) aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

SDE incorporates what previously was defined as environmental education, where the *goals* of environmental education are to:

1. foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political, and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas

2. provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment

3. create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups, and society as a whole towards the environment.

The objectives are to foster Awareness, Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Participation (UNESCO, 1977).

The definition of SDE makes the 1977 language more succinct and up to date; however the context is the same.

SDE in the forest context includes the woodland and forest ecosystems and the human interaction that occurs with it. An exploration of wood as a sustainable, renewable resource should be integral to any education programme on woods as it is only through responsible sustainable forest management that humans can continue to use this resource.

Trees, woods and forest provide an ideal resource for learning about the complexities of sustainable management. Learning about woods in Britain can help put the issues facing vulnerable forest ecosystems around the world into context. It is possible to gain knowledge and understanding of how a forest ecosystem works, how people use the products and how they work in the forest. This knowledge can then be expanded to include the global issues facing forests.

In Scotland 90% of all schools are within 1km of a woodland, which is about 15 minutes walk; this analysis has not been carried out in England and Wales (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2009). They provide a free extension to the school estate for challenging and stimulating learning. The learning can occur in an indoor or an outdoor space. However, any learning about a woodland ecosystem should involve some interaction with real trees outdoors.

FEI has a clear focus on experiential and 'first-hand' forms of learning. Again this can be indoors or outdoors using wood products, trees and forests to deliver learning and/or health objectives. Forest Education is about using wood products; trees, woods and forests as a learning resource for e.g. maths, art, science, physical education or emotional and social development. This can be incorporated into a Forest School programme but it depends on the needs of the individuals and the group involved.

Forest Education can be undertaken by anyone who has an understanding of the learning opportunities provided by trees and woods and with access to forest education resources, whilst Forest School needs a trained leader. Forest Education, in contrast to Forest School, offers an array of opportunities in different contexts, from one off experiences to longer term programmes.

Forest School definition

Forest School takes place on a regular basis over a period of time primarily within a wooded setting. It is a pedagogical technique using particular methods to deliver learning objectives by a trained Forest School leader. Forest School can also foster a wide range of health and social outcomes (O'Brien and Murray, 2007; Lovell, 2009; Roe, 2009).

Forest School is one aspect of Forest Education its uniqueness is that it is a developmental process that must involve regular and frequent visits to an outdoor area. Over this period of time the process is supported by trained leaders who create opportunities for each individual to engage with nature and develop skills within a recognised framework. The process is open ended and participant led and, as such, requires a high ratio of adults to participants.

The process could occur on a beach or a meadow; however it works particularly well in woodland because of the added benefits of being with trees (O'Brien and Murray, 2007; FCS Education Strategy 2009).

2. Methodology

2.1 Data collection and analysis

Table 2 outlines the key methods used in the review, further details can be found following the table.

Table 2: Details of methods used during this review

Method	Participants / sources	Total number
Documentary analysis	FEI Partnership Fund Project reports, FEI annual reviews, financial spreadsheets, other reports or strategies	66 project reports accessed
Interviews	FEI partners, president, FEI steering group members, FEI national and regional coordinators - FC employees - Current and previous FEI employees/volunteers - BTCV - SCA Timber Supply - Grounds for Learning - City of Edinburgh Council - Coillte Panel Products - Welsh Timber Forum - Field Studies Council - England Forest Industries Partnership	20 interviews
Discussion groups at pre-existing meetings	FEI Forestry Commission education policy leads and national coordinators meeting with the Field Studies Council, England FEI chairs, Wales FEI chairs	3 meetings attended – discussions recorded
Survey	FEI Cluster Groups in England, Scotland and Wales The survey was sent out in early 2010. Since then new groups have been created.	73[9] sent out in early 2010; 44 completed (60%) response rate. Sent primarily to cluster group chairs
Case studies – drawing on interviews and the Cluster group survey	Cluster groups chosen: Scotland - North East England - Devon - Bolton	5 case studies (6 interviews)

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[9] The cluster group survey results are based on the 73 groups that were thought to be active in March 2010.

	- Birmingham Wales - Ynys mon (Anglesey)	

Documentary analysis

We have drawn on the project reports (we accessed 66 out of 139 funded projects) that are produced by cluster groups that are awarded FEI Partnership Funding. These reports provide information on the types of activities undertaken through the funding, who leads the projects, the type of audience involved and it outlines the match funding sources used. An excel spreadsheet of key information from the reports was put together.

Interviews and discussion groups

Interviews have been undertaken with a range of organisational representatives, FEI coordinators and through meetings of the FEI cluster group chairs in England and Wales. In the interviews we have covered five key areas of FEI: history, aims, activities, impacts, governance and funding (Appendix 1).

Survey

A tailored questionnaire, which was developed with input from Forestry Commission staff, was set up on line for cluster group chairs to complete (Appendix 2). Efforts were made to ensure a reasonable response rate was obtained such as extending the time period for filling in the questionnaires, sending reminders and prompts to the cluster groups, and gaining support from FEI coordinators to encourage questionnaire completion. A 60% response rate was achieved (Table 3)

Table 3: Survey response rates by country (a list of all cluster groups can be found in Appendix 3)

	Responded with results	Response but no results	No response	Total number of cluster groups
England	22 (67%)	3	7	33
Scotland	13 (68%)	0	6	19
Wales	9 (41%)	0	12	21
Totals	**44 responses**			**73 groups at March 2010**

Case studies

We have used case studies of a small number of cluster groups in order to gain more detailed insights into how groups become active and why there might be changes in activity levels within cluster groups over time. We also explored with respondents what makes cluster groups successful and what challenges groups face in setting themselves up and in continuing activity. The case study methods included interviews with chairs/secretaries of cluster groups.

Analysis

Survey data from the cluster group questionnaire was analysed using Excel to produce descriptive and frequency statistics[10]. Key aspects of the project reports were entered into Excel to identify relevant descriptive statistics and to categorise the range of projects run through FEI cluster group Partnership Funded activities.

Interviews and discussions were primarily transcribed or detailed notes were taken and these were entered into NVivo (a qualitative software package) and coded for themes and patterns within the data.

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[10] It should be noted that the findings of the survey reported in this review are not weighted. Therefore there is an acknowledged imbalance in the proportion of responses from each country and care should be taken in interpreting the findings. Further, due to the response rate, the results are not a complete picture of all cluster group membership, activities and motivations. Those groups which did not respond may have some key differences to those who did; for example in organisation, motivation and activity levels. However a 60% response rate to the survey is good.

3. Results

3.1 History and development of FEI

The inaugural meeting of the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) was held in 1992 with the first cluster group launched in 1994 by David Bellamy. Terence Mallinson (President of FEI) was a key driver behind the development of FEI as he was concerned about the lack of information young people were receiving about trees plus the lack of opportunities for first hand learning about trees, woods and forests. At the time Terence was also on the board of commissioners for the Forestry Commission (FC); the commissioners have a number of statutory duties and powers to, for example, promote the interests of forestry. As part of his role he raised the idea of engaging more with children and young people and from these ideas and discussions FEI was developed.

FEI was not set up to replace or duplicate existing effort in the education field but to work with others to reinforce and assist their work (FEI, 1995). The idea was for FEI to operate as a partnership and to encourage others to get involved and develop engagement and activities that suited them, leading to the development of local activities via what became known as cluster groups (see section 3.2 for more on the governance structure of FEI).

A key part of FEI's role is to act as a facilitator and enabler in linking and aiding organisations and individuals in the growing network of cluster groups that provides a valuable store of local resources and expertise.

FEI is a partnership; at the start it was supported by the Forestry Commission (FC), Timber Trade Federation (TTF), Forestry Industry Council of Great Britain and the Forestry Trust for Conservation and Education (FEI, 1997).

In the early days FEI was co-ordinated by the Forestry Commission, via an Environmental Education Co-ordinator. The first FEI coordinator was employed by the Forestry Trust for Conservation and Education (and then the Woodland Trust) in 1996 to provide a central point to whom the cluster groups could go to for information, advice and promotional material. Table 4 outlines some of the key points in the development of the FEI since its creation.

Table 4: Key points in the history of the FEI

1992	FEI inaugural meeting in London.
1993/4	Employment of environmental education coordinator for the FC who took on secretariat of FEI First constituted meeting of FEI Launch of FEI nationally by David Bellamy
1995	First guidelines for regional clusters produced
1996	First dedicated FEI coordinator employed FEI GB Executive Board appointed
1997	First cluster group networking event in Cambridge
1999	First regional FEI coordinator employed in South Wales
	Partnership Fund set up on 1st April
2000	25 cluster groups in Britain S Wales FEI group organises the first FEI Forest School training course
2001	Cluster group involvement in Forest School starts to increase
2003	Forestry Commission devolution to FC England, Scotland and Wales Woods for Learning Forum created in Wales (includes FEI representative and it meets annually with the education minister)
2004	FEI Website online Country Steering Groups developed
2005	Glossy publication of GB FEI annual review
	FEI Strategic Review
2006	GB National Executive stop meeting on a formal basis
2009	Launch of the FEI Forest School Quality Improvement Framework
2010	Revised Website on line

The target audiences for FEI were identified as:
- Children and young people
- Teachers and youth leaders
- Head teachers and governors
- Lecturers in education colleges and departments
- Educational advisors in science, geography and environmental studies
- Others with environmental education interests
- People in the forestry, timber and processing industries (FEI, 2001).

Fund raising was developed through a Corporate Associate Scheme (see section 3.3 and Appendix 4) with the FC providing grant for a Partnership Fund and employing staff, with other partners providing in kind contributions and funding for core activities such as an annual conference, website and administration.

3.1.1 Original and current aims and objectives

The 1995 guidelines for cluster groups outlined the aim of FEI which was to 'increase young people's understanding of the local and global importance of trees, woodlands and the forestry industry and timber trade'.

By 2003/4 the key aim had changed to acknowledge sustainability issues and it was 'to increase the understanding and appreciation, particularly among young people, of the environmental, social and economic potential of trees, woodlands and forests, the link between the tree and everyday wood products and the benefits of using wood as a sustainable resource'. The objectives below this aim were to focus on:

1. wood as a sustainable resource
2. enhancing the environment
3. providing social benefits
4. supporting the economy

The FEI in 2010 has four stated aims (FEI annual report 2009):

1. First-hand learning opportunities - To increase the use of woodlands and related industries for first hand learning by educators and others.

2. Sustainable Development - To increase opportunities for individuals and communities to learn about the importance of trees and forests for conservation of the environment, for the landscape, and for biodiversity.

3. Wood as a Sustainable Resource - To increase the opportunities for people to learn about the link between the tree and everyday wood products and the social, economic and environmental benefits of wood as a sustainable resource, both locally and globally.

4. Emotional and Physical Well Being - To increase the opportunities for individuals and communities to improve their emotional and physical well being through a range of educational, training and learning experiences with wood, trees and woodlands.

It is clear that the aims and objectives have evolved and diversified since the creation of FEI to take note of changes in government policies, and a focus on sustainability, biodiversity, well-being, and climate change issues. Differences in education policy between England, Scotland and Wales and the three country forestry strategies have also broadened the aims of FEI. FEI activities are primarily targeted at children and young people e.g. age 3-18 but also can include activities that are community events targeting a broad range of people. It is also focused on reaching a variety of adult professionals through CPD [Continued Professional Development] events and Forest School training. Cluster group members who develop and deliver projects can also benefit in developing their own skills.

3.1.2 Views from interviewees and cluster group survey

The aims of FEI were considered broad and relevant by the majority of interviewees. Their broadness is seen as an advantage by a few as it allows for diversity in the cluster groups to undertake a wide range of activities. Broad aims also have the advantage of being able to be incorporated into partner organisations' own aims. There is some concern that Aim 3 'wood as a sustainable resource' has not got as an effective focus as the other aims at present and that more could be made of this aim. This has been recognised by the England steering group (Townsend, 2009). The subject is now being addressed by a focus on funding partnership projects with this overall aim. This was acknowledged by the majority of interviewees who felt that this issue needed to be addressed. Some interviewees also felt that this was a particularly good time to focus on Aim 3.

> *you know the Government's push for sustainable homes, carbon footprints, you know we have got many many positives in our wardrobe and perhaps we are coming to a stage where we [forest products sector] are far more relevant than we have ever been and actually that perhaps supports my notion that in any shape or form we can bring the knowledge to a younger generation as a part of the educational programme' (Coillte)*

> *A problem we have is kids don't see forestry as for them, so we hope FEI can inform them with a bit of career focus through the initiatives they have. FEI is a real opportunity because of the links it has with schools (England Forest Industries Partnership)*

A lack of engagement of the forestry industry in FEI at present was seen as potentially leading to less focus on this particular aim. A number of respondents thought the aims could be updated to include more clearly a reference to climate change. A key desire behind all of the FEI aims is to encourage young people to get out into, and engage with, woodlands, as the following quote suggests:

> *…the aims I think are well expressed in the things that you've seen we've published about aims. It is obviously to do with introducing, giving opportunities to make and be involved and it is building up confidence in young people. I think probably you'd see this in the young that they can work together more easily in a woodland setting like that than they can in a classroom, team spirit appears, particularly if it is a project – we are going to do this, we are going to make that , and that encouragement to bringing out leaders and getting people working together I think is one of the most important things that it is trying to achieve. When it does achieve it it means quite a lot because very often the teachers will find*

that the most unruly child and the most difficult child becomes one of the leaders and really takes part when he feels that everybody is working with him. So that I think is confidence building is one of the important aims behind the whole thing. I don't think it is an aim to make them all into foresters and timber merchants, that is not an aim; it is an aim to give them the feeling that nature has got something in their lives permanently from then on. It is an aim to let them feel that it is a place to relax, that it's a place also to enjoy by keeping your eyes open and seeing what there is; and it is a place that anybody should feel they can get into, you know in other words access, it's what we are talking about here anyway, is necessary but also something that is available to them, they don't feel prohibitive (FEI President).

A number of cluster group respondents were concerned with the aims and approaches of FEI. Some argued that there should be less focus on Forest School within the FEI:

> *take emphasis away from Forest School - let's do something new and innovative that no one else is doing (E[11]).*

The above view related to concerns that others might think FEI was only involved in Forest School and not other activities. One cluster group chair had strong opinions regarding the role of the FEI in promoting careers in forestry and related industries:

> *Promotion of timber industries and careers is a very narrow view of FEI and certainly not one that I have seen any Cluster group really take to heart. If this is what the forest industry thinks FEI exists to achieve then it needs to wake up. ConFor, Timber Trades Federation, etc. should drive this themselves. FEI is about outdoor learning linked to, but not exclusively tied to, the mainstream curriculum. Forest School is great but it should not be the only focus of FEI Cluster Groups. This specialist delivery model exists in parallel to FEI and in many cases is a career for those involved not a voluntary contribution (S).*

One urban chair suggested that the FEI focuses too rigidly on wooded environments and pointed out that, for some, such landscapes are rare.

> *Show less bias in research for using woodland environments and use case studies from groups using other natural spaces to carry out Forest School ethos. This is important because London has a lack of woodland. Woodland covers only 4.6% of the Capital and the seven Boroughs along*

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[11] 'E' denotes an English cluster group, 'S' a Scottish group and 'W' a Welsh cluster group.

*the Thames have less than 20 hectares between them. Many groups in
London are using other natural sites to conduct sessions and are still
reporting success. Conduct more research in heavily urban areas and
more children's perspectives (all ages) included versus adults perceptions
on what is important and the learning outcomes achieved (E).*

One respondent thought that there still needs to be clarification on the remit of FEI and
how it relates to Forest School and to the Forestry Commission:

*Clearly defined aims and objectives, how it is different to Forest school
and Forestry Commission (W).*

3.2 Governance and management of FEI

FEI is an initiative which covers Great Britain (GB); it was governed by a GB Executive
committee until approximately 2006 – made up of a president, a chair and
representatives of the, then, eight partner organisations. However, the GB Executive
meetings became increasingly dominated by issues related to the education policies of
each country. In (about) 2004 country steering groups were set up in England, Scotland
and Wales to bring in further partners that might only be interested in what is happening
in each specific country and to make the groups more relevant to specific country
education and forestry policies. FC education policy leads from each country still meet to
discuss issues of relevance at a GB level – specifically the FEI website, the annual
networking conference and the management of the accounts which is undertaken
through a service level agreement with the Field Studies Council. An assessment panel
at a GB level (with representatives from each country) assess Partnership Fund
applications.

3.2.1 FEI partner organisations and steering groups

FEI was supported until about 2005/6 by eight partner organisations that operated at a
GB level, until country steering groups were developed and the number of partners
changed and increased:
1. Forestry Commission
2. Field Studies Council
3. Timber Trade Federation
4. ConFor
5. Tree Council
6. Woodland Trust (still supporting FEI but no longer a national partner)
7. BTCV
8. Groundwork (England and Wales)

The FEI is now governed by the three national steering groups (Figure 1). The partner
organisations have different levels of involvement in FEI depending on interest and

resources. The steering groups can now be targeted towards the issues and agendas of each country and can include partners that are primarily interested in that particular country. For example the Welsh Timber Forum and Coed Cymru have joined the Wales steering group, England Forest Industries Partnership in England and Central Scotland Forest Trust the Scottish steering group.

The national steering group in Scotland is supplemented by two sub groups: a 'Forest School' sub-group and a 'careers and vocational education' sub-group. England had a 'wood as a sustainable resource' sub group and previously had a Forest School sub group that is now part of the Institute of Outdoor Learning (see 3.2.5). The steering groups meet to update each other on progress, discuss future direction, ratify work programmes and agree strategic focus. Terms of reference for country steering groups have been produced and are available on the FEI website.

3.2.2 Country coordinators and regional development officers

The role of FEI coordinators is to promote the FEI and support cluster groups in forming, applying for grants and networking. Coordinators also run CPD training for example in England on topics such as Forest School, and climate change.

In England the FEI coordinator is employed by the FC and supports the activity of the English cluster groups.

Wales has one coordinator and two regional support staff employed by Forestry Commission Wales (FCW); a lead coordinator who manages the North and Mid Wales cluster groups, and supporters in the South West and the South East of Wales. The coordinators are supported by the rest of the Woodlands for Learning team who often act as secretarial support to their local cluster groups.

In Scotland there is a national coordinator working for Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) who is supported by regional FEI development posts in the Edinburgh and Lothian's region and in the North East. The Edinburgh development post is funded by the City of Edinburgh Council and FCS. The North East development post is funded by FCS, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage. A part time FEI Forest School Scotland coordinator post was created in 2010.

The country coordinators are managed by FC education policy leads in England and Scotland and by the Woodlands for Learning team leader in Wales. The coordinators organise and run cluster group chairs meetings and a small number of chairs also sit on the country steering groups. Not all of the coordinators work full time or work on only FEI activities. For example in Wales the coordinators in the Woods for learning team have FEI as one component of their jobs.

Figure 1: Structure of FEI
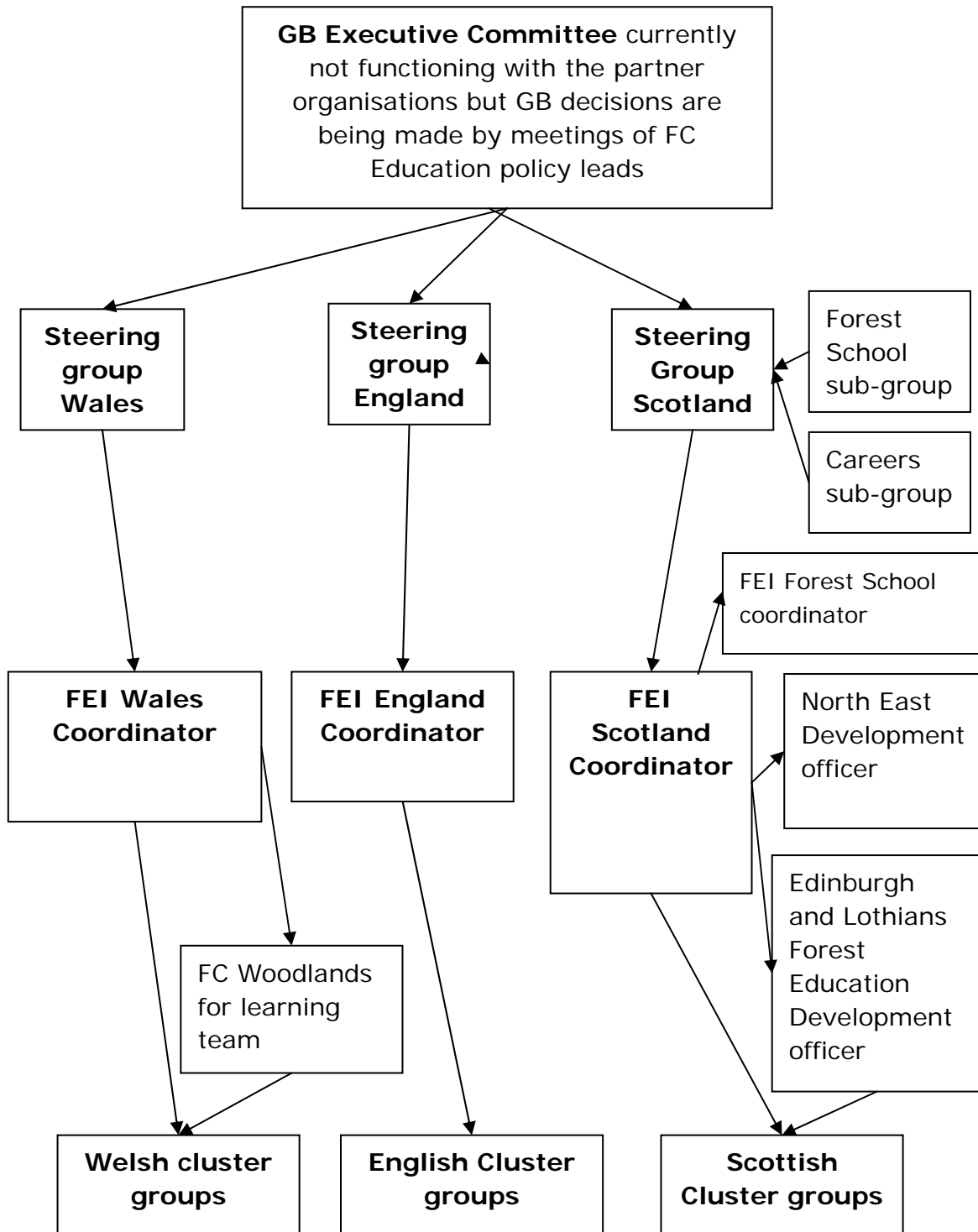
2.3 Cluster groups

There were a total of 73 active cluster groups in Britain when the survey was sent out in early 2010. In order to create a cluster group participants are required to become constituted, sign a letter of accreditation, have a chairperson, secretary and a bank account. Different types of people join the cluster groups (see section 3.4) based on their interests in education and woodlands. Many participate in a voluntary capacity or combine voluntary activity with some accommodation of FEI within their work role e.g. as a teacher or wildlife officer/ranger for example. Each cluster group is independent and their objectives will differ depending on local circumstances.

3.2.4 Role of FC and the partners

The FC in England, Scotland and Wales is the lead partner and the key driver of FEI and has been from its beginning. It employs the 3 national coordinators outlined previously. It puts resources into the Partnership Fund (see next section 3.3) that cluster groups can bid into to carry out projects. In Wales FC employees in the Woodlands for Learning team act as the secretariat for most of the Welsh cluster groups and they sometimes get involved in the running of FEI projects. Secretariat of the country steering groups is provided by the country coordinators. The different levels of FC involvement in FEI provide various models of engagement (Box 1).

The Field Studies Council manages the FEI funds after taking over this role from the Woodland Trust a few years previously. FEI is not a charity and could not administer funding and FC was keen for one of the non-governmental organisation partners within FEI to administer the funds. At present the majority of partners are not especially active at the steering group level, however they are often more active at the local cluster group level. The difficulties the authors encountered in arranging interviews with partners at a national level seem to illustrate this lack of active engagement and also some confusion about what they need to do or should be doing (see 3.2.7). However, from interviews with partner representatives, this did not mean that they were not interested, and attending national steering group meetings provides them with an important update of action and progress.

Box 1: Levels of FC input in England, Scotland and Wales in March 2010

Model 1: England – 1 full time FEI coordinator, 33 cluster groups, 25 FCE staff involved in the cluster groups[12].

Model 2: Scotland – 1 part time coordinator, 2 development officers, 1 part time Forest School coordinator, 19 cluster groups and 26 members of FCS staff involved

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[12] Number of Forestry Commission staff involved relate to the 44 groups responding to the survey

Model 3: Wales – 1 full time coordinator and 2 supporters, 22 cluster groups, 19 FCW Woods for Learning staff who act as secretariat/chair on the majority of cluster groups

3.2.5 Forest School

Forest School is an important part of FEI delivery (see section 3.4.7). As mentioned FEI in Scotland has a sub group at a national level on Forest School and have appointed a Forest School Coordinator. Forest School Wales was created a couple of years ago in 2008 and is an independent charity which receives some funding from FCW. In England the Institute for Outdoor Learning has a Forest School Special Interest Group and the England FEI coordinator sits on this group. There have been concerns raised by some within FEI of the dominance of projects focused on Forest School and worries that FEI would be primarily seen as a vehicle for Forest School. Some cluster groups have formed with a specific focus on Forest School and to undertake Forest School training so that it can be delivered locally. In order to address the issue from a funding point of view only 40% of the Partnership Fund is now allocated to Forest School projects.

There is a Forest School section on the FEI website and FEI has developed a Forest School Quality Improvement Framework to ensure, promote and improve the quality of Forest School. It is a self evaluation framework.

There are 4 sections to the Framework:
1) Learning Environment
2) Health, Safety & Well-being,
3) Delivery and Communication,
4) Learners.

3.2.6 Communication and networking

Annual report and meeting minutes

An annual report is now being produced, minutes of meetings of the steering groups and cluster groups are sometimes made available on the FEI website but not consistently for all meetings.

Annual networking conference

An annual national networking conference is held each year and rotates between the three countries. This is the main opportunity for people from the cluster groups to gather together and hear about the latest issues of research and practice and discuss and exchange ideas. This is usually a well attended event. Some of the networking days have been two day events with the first day focusing broadly on FEI and the second being more specifically about Forest School (Box 2). Feedback on these events from evaluation forms is very positive.

Box 2: Examples of the networking events in 2005 and 2009

FEI National Networking Day 2005
Swindon

WHY? Bring forestry industry and educators together
For the first time, timber industry speakers presented their views to some 75 attendees from local authorities, the teaching community and the UK forestry sector at the Forest Education Initiative's annual National Networking Day, held in Swindon. The conference focused on stimulating children's interest in forests and wood products through building practical partnerships between educators and industry

Presenters from Weyerhaeuser Products, SCA Timber Supply and Howarth Timber told delegates that, for their companies, FEI represented one of the best methods of communicating wood's sustainable credentials to the next generation. Examples of the range of engagement between industry and FEI, included the promotion of FEI and its Corporate Associates Scheme and the funding of local projects involving children with woods and forest products. Amongst the afternoon sessions, SCA Timber Supply also facilitated a publicity training workshop for FEI cluster members, designed to help spread awareness of FEI's activities
(Press release by C. Hair, 2005).

FEI and Forest School NETWORKING EVENT 13th & 14th November 2009
Dalguise, Nr. Dunkeld
WHY? This two day networking event aimed to share information on 'Woods, Trees and Climate Change' (Day 1), and on 'Arts and Story Telling' in Forest School (Day 2)

WHO? The target audience included Forest Education Initiative partners, Forest School leaders, Teachers (all sectors), and other interested parties.

Day 1: 95 people attended; Day 2: 92 people attended the event, with the majority of people attending both days.

The following sectors were represented in these proportions (approx. as not all companies recorded or overlap):
Forestry Commission Scotland: 17
Local authority: 11
FEI cluster group representatives: 6
Other organisations incl. NGOs: 48
Schools & colleges: 15
Freelance/ individual: 7
(FEI and Forest School Networking Event, 2009 Report – P Martin).

FEI website

The FEI website is one of the main ways that the aims and activities of the initiative are communicated. It is where people can go to find out if there is already a cluster group in their area that they could join. It has learning resources available. The website gets on average 12,200 hits per month and approximately 146,605 hits (from autumn 2009-autumn 2010) annually. The website was updated in late 2010 to make it more user friendly and to put the application process for the Partnership Fund online.

3.2.7 Views from interviewees and cluster group survey

Steering groups, cluster groups and partners

The country steering groups and the role of the partners within them did not seem to be clear at first to all partners, however the groups are now starting to take shape. Despite this it was suggested that a clear remit and steer for those on the steering groups is needed so that participants know what is required of them.

> It's an umbrella (FEI) to come together which gives it a little bit more structure because there is a constitution and it is part of the national GB initiative and it gives it some kind of kudos as opposed to people coming together at a local level. I think that helps as well (FC Education Policy lead).

There is general support for the reorganisation of the governance of FEI to the country level with the steering groups rather than at GB level, to accommodate new/relevant partners and to be more aligned with country education and forestry policies. There are concerns from FC respondents about how much input partner organisations have in each country at a national level and that greater input from partners would be useful, however not all partners have a clear idea of what FEI is and some partners are more active at a local level rather than at a national level.

> Ok I mean we really are hardly involved at all. I think we have been fairly regularly invited to come along to the steering group at a national level [in Scotland], which I've been in this role for 3 years and I've managed to do one [meeting]. I guess that's because at a national level we share overlapping objectives. I didn't come away with a thoroughly crystal clear idea of what FEI was all about because I wasn't asked to take part (Grounds for Learning).

Partners were seen as important for a number of reasons by the FC:

> They bring credibility to it. They bring other areas of expertise, other view points, ideas, other contacts so you know your partners can be extremely useful and helpful in helping you deliver your aims and objectives. It's problematic because obviously you have got to nurture those relationships and that requires time (FC Education Policy Lead).

The partners interviewed appreciate the support of the FC within FEI.

Respondents suggested that cluster groups are able to develop based on interest and need at a local level, this also means that they may fade or cease activity if there is no local need. This was seen as acceptable by many interviewees:

> *'If there aren't any issues at the local level or there isn't any kind of initiative that they want to get sorted, then it wanes for a while and then they find something that they want to do and they come back together; then that's absolutely fine (FC Education Policy Lead).*

People can engage in cluster groups at different levels e.g. be part of the core of the cluster group setting up and organising projects, or they can attend meetings, or be part of the wider cluster group and go to events/training. They may want to become a chair or sit on a country steering group. At present there seems to be little contact between the steering groups and cluster groups except for minutes placed on the website.

Forest School

Forest School was seen as just one aspect of FEI and FEI was valued for not focusing solely on Forest School. It was clear that the majority of respondents felt there was a distinction between FEI and Forest School. For example Forest School was seen as having a particular ethos with a clear training structure. It was felt by many that the FEI focused on forest education more generally and allowed practitioners to deliver this education at a level they felt comfortable with. There was a feeling that there was the potential for people to move on from Forest School once trained and to get involved in broader forest education activities or vice versa. There was also a view that Forest School has strengthened FEI by bringing in more people and groups.

> *I value FEI as not being Forest School focused, as being wider (FEI chairs meeting, England).*

> *What we said we would do is rather than try and shift everybody from going from Forest School onto other things was to try and raise the capacity of those that are delivering Forest School to consider how they might grow into, kind of, wider forest educators (FC education policy lead).*

> *Forest school would have happened without FEI. FEI would have continued without Forest School but the fact is that FEI is a mixture of people from forest and education sector and anyone delivering Forest School needs a patch of woodland to do it (FC education policy lead).*

Communication and networking

There were some concerns and confusion about how FEI communicates with others and makes itself known both internally (with cluster group members and partners) and

externally (to other organisations and the wider public). This was often linked to concerns that Forest School was much more widely known than FEI and that those who organise and run activities as part of cluster groups (whether through FEI funds or not) did not always badge their activities as FEI; they were either badged as Forest School or as the organisation leading the activity. It was thought that this did not help to make FEI more widely known.

The annual networking events were seen as valuable although there was some debate about whether there was enough interest and resource to hold one in each country. Further difficulties related to teachers needing to find cover to attend events and more generally of getting to venues e.g. Scottish participants travelling to Wales and vice versa. The value of the events were the opportunities to network and meet like minded people and find out how others were carrying out activities in practice. The specialised workshops that are held as part of the networking day/s were seen as important. However the need to accommodate the expectations of a diverse range of people meant that the events do not always meet those expectations. For some the specialised workshops were too focused on young children, Forest School or were too generic; there was a demand for more specialised skills training or more topical and relevant events, such as a focus on biodiversity.

A good proportion of interviewees expressed reservations about the website: from it being out of date to the practical issues of cluster groups posting meeting notes or photographs on the site, as the following suggests:

> *I struggled with things like pictures and I know at the moment if you go onto our page, I probably update it once in a blue moon. I don't find it very friendly to use, if I was a user going in I would find it quite hard to navigate around. The front page actually has improved, but I think it's when you get into your local cluster bit it is not great. (Edinburgh CG).*

It should be noted that the cluster group survey was undertaken before the website was updated in late 2010.

Further perceptions of the networking opportunities can be found in section 3.4.3.

Opportunities to network within FEI were of value to the chairs; 88% rated the opportunity to attend the National Networking Day as either 'very highly' or 'highly' valuable.

> *It is valuable to be part of the network but I/we probably don't use it enough (E).*

A number of respondents' felt that there are not enough opportunities to network.

> *We feel that there are not enough opportunities to network with other cluster groups, particularly in Powys. Individual members try to keep in contact with the other groups; however it would be useful for more county networking events to take place (W).*
> *Would like more interaction with other cluster groups; this has not been possible until now with the 'chairs' meeting in Birmingham on 1st April 2010 (E).*

Others experience barriers which prevent them from participating in the networking events. Of particular importance were the issues surrounding travelling distances to events.

> *…meetings are held in rural parts of the country. Having to take time off to attend the meetings and to have to pay for travel to the venues ends up costing the school a lot of money (E).*
> *Networking events need to be held regionally not nationally as travelling is always an issue in Powys (W).*
> *As Early years practitioners in full time employment - school would find it hard to release staff for national networking. Cluster group work is additional to teaching - voluntary and unpaid for most (W).*

3.3 Funding and resources

3.3.1 Sources of funding

The majority of FEI's funding comes from the FC in England, Scotland and Wales and in the past the Timber Trade Federation; this was supplemented by funds raised from external organisations typically within the timber and wood product industry through a Corporate Associate Scheme. The FC covers the costs of the FEI coordinators, it contributes support funding for two FEI development posts in Scotland and also contributes towards the FEI Partnership Fund (see 3.3.4). The TTF has in the past provided funds for core FEI costs, of about £5,000 per year, such as the website and National Networking events. FEI is supported, in kind, by the Field Studies Council (FSC) - through the provision of paid staff time managing and administering the FEI's finances. It is now provided under contract through a SLA between FC and FSC. The Woodland Trust managed and administered the funds before the FSC and employed the England FEI coordinator, however this has now changed and the FC employs the England coordinator. In previous years SCA Timber Supply also supported the FEI through the

provision of staff time and public relations expertise. Recent efforts have been made to publicise FEI and to request funding and other resources from TTF members.

The fundraising for the GB Core Fund was primarily undertaken by the FEI president through a Corporate Associate Scheme in which he approached forestry sector organisations to contribute to and support the FEI. However as he has reduced his fundraising activities, due partly to his belief that the cluster groups should raise money locally and to the current economic situation, the Core Fund (see below) is diminishing, and existing funds will possibly only sustain FEI for another two to three years at current spending levels.

3.3.2 Allocation of funding

Core funds are allocated at a GB level and are used for the website, the National Networking events and annual report. The FEI Partnership Fund operates at a country level with funds provided by FC and ring fenced in each country; these funds are used to support the activities of the cluster groups through:

- The £200 grant which can be used for start up costs, insurance, resources or materials. £300 in Wales is available for paying group insurance as agreed by the country steering group.
- The FEI Partnership Fund: £201 - £5000 can be used for specific activities which meet or 'enhance' the aims of the FEI.

In 2009/10 FCW provided £35,000 to the Partnership Fund, FCS £25,000 and FCE reduced its funding from £30,000 to £20,000 for that year.

3.3.3 The £200 grant and FEI Partnership fund

The cluster group survey showed there was considerable variation between the countries in the uptake of the £200 grant by the cluster groups. In Wales all nine of those who responded to this question in the survey reported having received at least one £200 grant. In England seven (out of 22) had received the grant and 10 (out of 13) in Scotland.

The FEI Partnership Fund, offers the cluster groups the opportunity to apply for sums of between £201 and £5000 (a maximum of £3000 for English Clusters in 2010-2011). The funds support the activities of the cluster groups and must be used for projects or activities which meet the aims of FEI. Successful cluster groups must find 50% match funding against which in kind support may be counted (e.g. the giving of someone's time). It is a challenge fund, meaning that cluster groups compete for the limited funds during the three rounds of fund allocation per year (February, June and October). Applications are judged against 13 specific criteria:

- Which of the FEI aims and objectives does the project meet?
- Does it involve local people, organisations and/or industries?
- Does it involve an FEI partner?
- Is the project linked to an appropriate curriculum?
- Has advice been sought from relevant professionals and groups?
- Is half the match funding in cash?
- Will the project give value for money?
- Will the benefits be sustained beyond the singe event/project?
- Is it an idea that could be used by other FEI cluster groups?
- Is the project innovative or does it introduce proven practice to a new geographical region?
- What FEI funding has the group received in the previous three years?
- Has the project got appropriate policies and procedures in place?
- Is there a process for evaluating the project?

3.3.4 FEI Partnership Fund projects in the years 2003-2009

Table 5a and b show the distribution of the Partnership Fund and small grant award between each country in the years 2003-2009. These figures below are taken from data gathered by the Field Studies Council in its administrative support role for FEI. Uptake is consistently greatest amongst the Welsh cluster groups; typically around half the funded projects, in any year, were undertaken in Wales.

Table 5a: Partnership funding since 2003

Year of application	Partnership funded projects (£201-£5000)												
	Forest School			Other project			Rejected/Withdrawn			Total funded			
	E	S	W	E	S	W	E	S	W	E	S	W	GB
2003	N/A*			1	1	6	1	0	0	1	1	6	8
2004	N/A*			5	1	7	7	1	1	5	1	7	13
2005	3	2	3	5	7	11	2	0	3	8	9	14	31
2006	2	1	1	5	3	10	6	0	3	7	4	11	22
2007	3	2	2	5	4	16	1	0	0	8	6	16	30
2008	2	1	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	6	5	7	18
2009	0	0	1	3	2	7	4	1	2	3	2	8	17
Totals	10	6	10	28	22	58	25	5	13	38	28	68	139

*No distinction was drawn between Forest School and Other FEI projects in 2003/2004. Data from FSC financial spreadsheets.

Table 5b: Number of small grants awarded between 2003-2009 (Field Studies Council data)

Year	Number of small grants awarded in total	Small grants awarded in England	Small grants awarded in Scotland	Small grants awarded in Wales
2003/4	7	1	1	4
2005	12	2	2	8
2006	20	3	4	13
2007	18	3	5	10
2008	22	3	8	11
2009	21	3	8	13

Not all the Partnership Funding is being applied for, for example in 2009/10 FC in England, Scotland and Wales provided 80K for the Partnership Fund and only £56.5K was awarded. There could be a number of reasons for this, for example it may be because many cluster groups want to focus on Forest School activities and the Partnership Fund now limits the amount allocated to Forest School (40% of the Partnership Fund). It may also be because cluster groups are finding it difficult to obtain match funding; this was an area of concern raised in the case study interviews. It may also be because some cluster groups find the application process difficult if they have no existing experience of applying for funding.

At present applications for funding are screened by the country coordinators who can assist and advise groups with their funding application. The proposals are then assessed at a GB level by the GB assessment panel which decides which projects meet the criteria and should therefore be funded.

3.3.5 Match funding

The FEI Partnership Fund project reports were used to investigate the amounts and sources of the matched funds. Table 6 provides details of the financial information as given in 62 project reports (4 of the 66 reports the authors accessed had no details of match funding). Approximately 139[13] projects were funded between 2003 and 2009 by approximately £422K; these projects would have received the same amount or more in match funds. This is illustrated by figures in Table 6, with the 62 projects gaining £192K FEI funds and being matched by £204K.

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[13] This does not include the £200 grant.

Table 6: Details of the FEI and match funding for the partnership funded projects (62 reports out of the 66 reported match funding out of 139 that were funded from 2003-2009)

Country	Number of reports detailing FEI funds	Total FEI funds awarded	Number of reports detailing match funds	Total match funds gained
England	14	£45,235.89	12	£53,105.32
Scotland	14	£42,417	13	£56,152.12
Wales	34	£105,242	28	£95,300.31
GB Total	62	£192,894.89	53	£204,557.75

Every £1 of FEI funding is at least matched, and is likely to be exceeded, by funds and resources from other sources. For example a significant £595.5K match funding was leveraged in 2009 with support from £56.5K of FEI Partnership Funding. This large sum was primarily to do with three successful lottery bids that cluster groups were involved in (FEI Annual report, 2010).

The sources of match funds, as given in the Partnership Funded project reports that were accessed, were categorised into 11 broad groups, this allows for an understanding of the general patterns in match funding and Figure 2 shows the results of this categorisation.

Figure 2: Match funding by source – identified in project reports
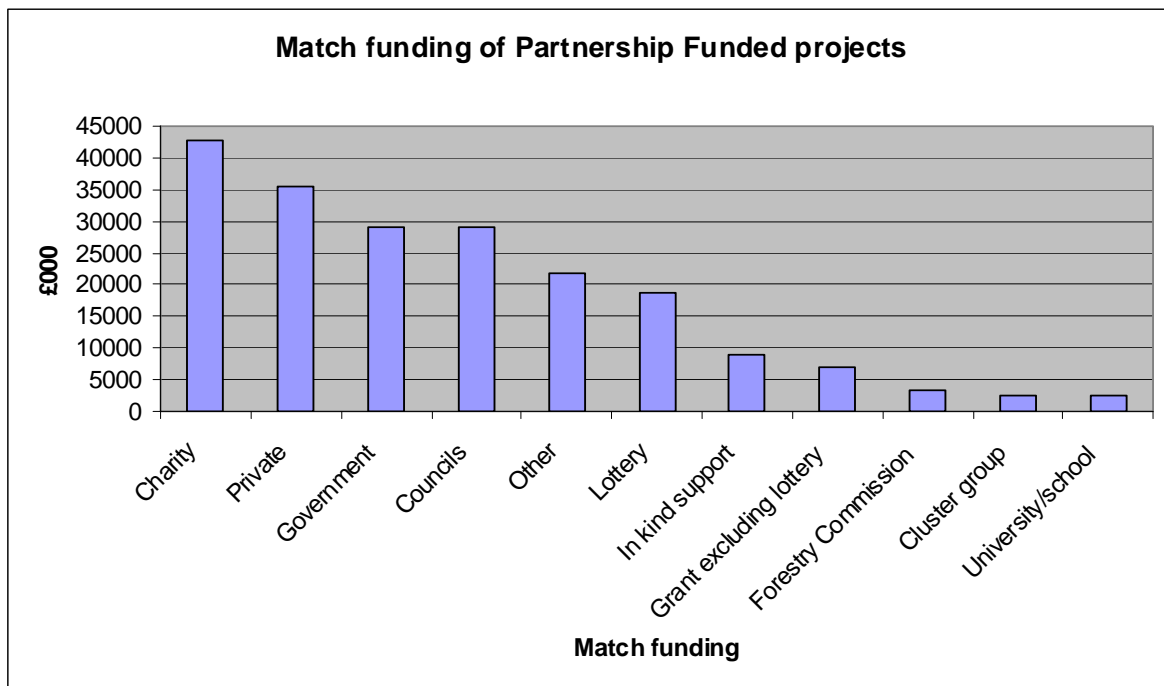
At the GB level charities, private bodies and government, both local (councils) and national, were the most common source of matched funds.

Cluster groups that receive funding are required to provide a final report six months after the funding is received, if the project is on-going an interim report is expected. There have been some difficulties in obtaining project reports from those who have received funding, this may be because the project is not completed when the report is requested but it may also be because there is no resource available to follow up and ensure the reports are obtained (Appendix 5). The data gathered via the project reports, although limited does provide valuable information regarding match funding including the amount of match funding received and origin, the reports also detail the number of people involved in the projects (although this is sometimes an estimate) and outcomes.

3.3.6 Views from interviewees and cluster groups

Importance of funding opportunities

The FEI Partnership Fund was seen as important by all the interviewees. However the Corporate Associate Scheme is no longer running as the President argued that funding needed to be sought at a more local level.

> *I have deliberately done nothing really for the last two or three years, simply because I wanted the fund raising to become more and more local (FEI President).*

The president's opinion was not, however, held by other interviewees; some argued that a central fund was necessary and enabled a wider range of activity than would be otherwise possible. This was, unsurprisingly, a view held by some of the cluster groups.

> *It would be good to see central admin work to secure more significant sums of money that only clusters can apply for - i.e. more than the current £5k which is very small (S).*

Various FEI activities do take place without support from the Partnership Fund; however for others the fund has been essential.

> *Interviewer: I was just thinking about the funding opportunities through FEI, the small grant and the larger one and to what extent they're important to the cluster groups.*
> *Female: Our cluster group would not have started without it. We applied for the large one with reciprocal funding from the airports authority before it became Spanish.*

Female: Our cluster group started without any funding at all as a mutual support network and in fact we've only very recently claimed some funding, which is small (FEI England Chairs meeting 2010).

The cluster group survey (Table 7) showed that opportunities to apply for funding is of particular value, 61% of respondents rated it 'very highly'.

Table 7: Value of opportunities to apply for funding

Opportunities to apply for funding	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
Very Highly	15 (68%)[14]	7 (54%)	5 (56%)	27 (61%)
Highly	3 (14%)	4 (31%)	3 (33%)	10 (23%)
Neutral	3 (14%)	1 (8%)	1 (11%)	5 (11%)
Not important	0	0	0	0

The opportunity to apply for funding emerged as the second highest rated 'most important' motivation for membership of FEI (Table 8).

Table 8: Importance of funding opportunities as a motivation in membership of FEI

Opportunities to access funding for educational activities	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
Very important	14 (64%)	7 (54%)	7 (78%)	28 (64%)
Important	5 (23%)	4 (31%)	2 (22%)	11 (25%)
Neutral	3 (14%)	1 (8%)	0	4 (9%)
Not important	0	0	0	0

The cluster group respondents gave a number of explanations as to why the funding opportunities are valuable; key points relate to enabling groups to undertake a range of activities and programmes:

…without them the group would not be able to carry out some activities (W).
Yes, very useful - we have received several grants that have allowed us to undertake some fantastic projects and purchase resources (E).
Yes, definitely useful - has been the main focus for our cluster and I think without funded projects the group could become a bit of a talking shop (E).
We have accessed funding on many occasions which has helped with projects. Especially the small FEI grant of £200 which has helped the group. Accessibility - we have been successful with all our cluster group bids (W).

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[14] Percentages do not always add up to 100 as not every group responded to the question.

Access to funding and resources

A number of the questions in the survey were designed to understand the cluster groups' experiences of applying for the available funds. Table 9 details the respondents rating of their experiences of 1) the availability and accessibility of resources, 2) the administration of the Partnership Fund, and, 3) the process of applying for the Partnership Fund.

Table 9: Experience of accessibility, application for and administration of the funds

Rating	Availability and access to resources	Administration of the Partnership Fund	Applying for Partnership Fund project funding
Excellent	1 (2%)	4 (9%)	6 (14%)
Good	17 (39%)	11 (25%)	13 (30%)
Adequate	16 (36%)	8 (18%)	6 (14%)
Poor	4 (9%)	3 (7%)	6 (14%)
N/A	3 (7%)	9 (20%)	6 (14%)

As the results indicate the majority felt that availability, administration of and the application process for the Partnership Fund was either 'excellent', or 'adequate/good'. However four thought that the availability of and access to resources was 'poor'. Six respondents felt that the application process was 'poor'. The reasons for these perceptions were explored in further questions in the survey.

The application process was argued to be too complicated and problematic by six respondents:

> *…the grant bid form is not very user friendly (W).*
> *Members complain that the form is very complicated (W).*

Similarly a small number reported issues after the application had been submitted:

> *We found the application process easy on the last occasion although the delay in response time almost jeopardised match funding opportunities (W).*

The responses to the survey indicated that there is still some confusion regarding application for the funds, particularly in relation to who can apply and how often. The following responses relate to the small grant:

> *Not really knowing whether it [applying for the fund] is appropriate to do so (E).*

Most of the energy has gone into the larger grants and I didn't realise you could apply for both! (E).
…It's not obvious that we can apply. More info needed and made easier to apply for please (W).

There were also similar levels of confusion in relation to the partnership fund:

not sure what funding opportunities are available…(E).
We can't use it for what we need it for and we aren't really sure what we can use it for…..(S).

Despite funding being a particularly valued aspect of membership, a number of the cluster groups suggest that the type of funding available i.e. project based is not always what was sought:

Yes but they are limited, inasmuch that longer term, more sustainable funding is needed to make a real impact (S).
The central FEI fund is useful but becoming less so as its value is decreasing in real terms, more conditions are imposed and it takes a lot of effort for relatively little return (S).

Others felt that the amounts for which they could apply were limited:

For only £5k there are too many hoops to jump through (S).
They are potentially useful but the application process for the partnership fund has become increasingly cumbersome for the level of funding available (S).

However it should be stated that not all the respondents had such issues with the accessibility and usefulness of the funds:

I think that they are accessible and they are flexible in what you can use them for which is good (E).

There is concern from some regarding the need for each funded project to be different from previous projects. As with many funding schemes, projects have to be new rather than a continuation of pre-existing activity.

I think probably because I work in that area as well, I get quite frustrated with funds that are constantly looking for new projects rather than supporting what they have already set up….(FEI Development Office Scotland).

> *Could be better. FEI is an initiative - so not really possible to use FEI
> funding to replicate good projects straight off - they have to be given a
> new slant. Can't really fund pure FS / FS training despite this being what
> everybody wants as this will swamp funding pot (W).*
> *FEI is failing the majority of cluster groups and needs to look again at
> how the money is distributed. As the reasons given are lack of funds for
> all the cluster groups FEI should partner with a large funder such as the
> lottery to provide serious funds to cluster groups if they are serious about
> their worth. Schools are looking for sustainable long term projects and
> Forest School fits the bill. It isn't necessary to invent other projects. The
> fact that FEI award is innovative, i.e. doesn't award to duplicating
> projects flies in the face of the idea of best practice. Cluster groups
> should be encouraged to learn from each other, copy and be given the
> funds to roll-out these ideas on a wider basis (S).*

Any project activity going on within the cluster groups that is not funded through the Partnership Fund is not recorded in any official way so it is difficult to get an overall picture of the total amount of activity taking place within cluster groups.

There were also some concerns that groups may form together to access the funding, carry out a project and then disband.

Perceptions of match funding

There are some concerns that groups are finding it difficult to gain matching funding in the current economic climate leading to a reduction in applications to the Partnership Fund.

> *There has been a progressive decline but a real drop in the last couple of
> years which we think is to do with difficulty in match funding. I think
> that's got a lot to do with the match funding. But what's happened is
> although you have got the decline in funded projects, you have got a
> massive increase in groups. What XXX said is the number of projects
> funded doesn't always reflect the level of FEI activity carried out in
> Scotland as groups often carry out work without partnership funding.
> You know they are getting any funding they need from elsewhere or its
> payment in kind because maybe two organisations within the cluster
> group are doing something (FC Education Policy Lead).*

Sixteen of the respondents who provided written comments to a question regarding the match funding requirement confirmed the Policy Lead's perceptions that finding and securing match funding is difficult for the cluster groups. The respondents' stated that they have had or were anticipating issues with identifying and accessing match funding:

The match funding was difficult and an obstacle (E).

The responses indicated that there were a number of factors which contributed to the situation. For some a lack of time and skills meant that finding matched funding was difficult:

> *…it is time consuming, too much paperwork involved, having to find match funding and as someone who is doing this in my own time, it is difficult to find enough time (E).*
> *Everyone is very busy and has little time to chase match funding (S).*
> *Some members managed the match funding requirements easily; however most who have little experience with fund raising found this challenging (E).*

The current economic situation is causing problems with finding the matched funding:

> *I was quite lucky the 1st time in that 3 members of the cluster were very forthcoming with offers of match. This time it has been harder as the council don't have any spare cash! Would probably make it easier if the % of match required were reduced slightly (E).*
> *…Funding is difficult at the moment and public sector e.g. local authority, FC has all but dried up (E).*

However it should be noted that the ability to make up match funding with 'in kind' donations was appreciated by some cluster groups:

> *Getting 50% match funding can be difficult - it means that we work with larger organisations. We do use some volunteer time to match other funds and this is very useful (E).*
> *It is helpful that in kind contributions can be included. I believe a lot more is contributed in-kind than is ever claimed though (E).*
> *…Match funding would be easier if more 'in kind' match funding was acceptable (S).*

Not all reported issues with finding match funding:

> *… Match funding wasn't a problem for this project, fairly easy (E)*
> *Sometimes it is difficult to secure match funding although for our recent projects this has not been a problem (S)*

The requirement for match funding within FEI means that cluster groups have to gain buy-in from other organisations and groups, this is an important factor that is valued by

the main funder (FC) it means that responsibility for funding does not rest solely with the FC, and it can provide opportunities for partner organisations to contribute.

3.4 Cluster groups –members, activities, impacts and experiences

3.4.1 Membership numbers

The results of the survey show that the 44 cluster groups who responded currently have around[15] 1405 individual members. Of these approximately 607 individuals (43%) were described as 'active members' (i.e. they occasionally or regularly attend meetings, participate in activities and contribute towards group planning). Table 10 details the levels of cluster group membership between the countries.

Table 10: Cluster group membership by country

	England	**Scotland**	**Wales**	**Total**
Registered as members	850	220	335	1405
Sometimes 'active'[16] members	391 (46%)	108 (49%)	108 (32%)	607 (43% of total registered members)
Regularly attend meetings e.g. on going active participation	267 (31%)	106 (48%)	91 (27%)	464 (33%)
Total of those who are sometimes active and those who regularly attend meetings	**658 (77%)**	**214 (97%)**	**199 (59%)**	**1,071 (76%)**

(Results relate to the 22 English, 13 Scottish and 9 Welsh cluster groups who responded to survey)

3.4.2 Occupation and backgrounds of the cluster group members

To better understand the membership of the cluster groups the survey asked a number of questions relating to their members' backgrounds, experience and employment (Figure 3 and Appendix 6).

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[15]Approximate figures were given by some cluster groups
[16] i.e. those members who are active within the group to any degree (they occasionally attend meetings, participate in activities and contribute towards group planning and are not just a name on the membership list)

Figure 3: Occupation or background of cluster group members
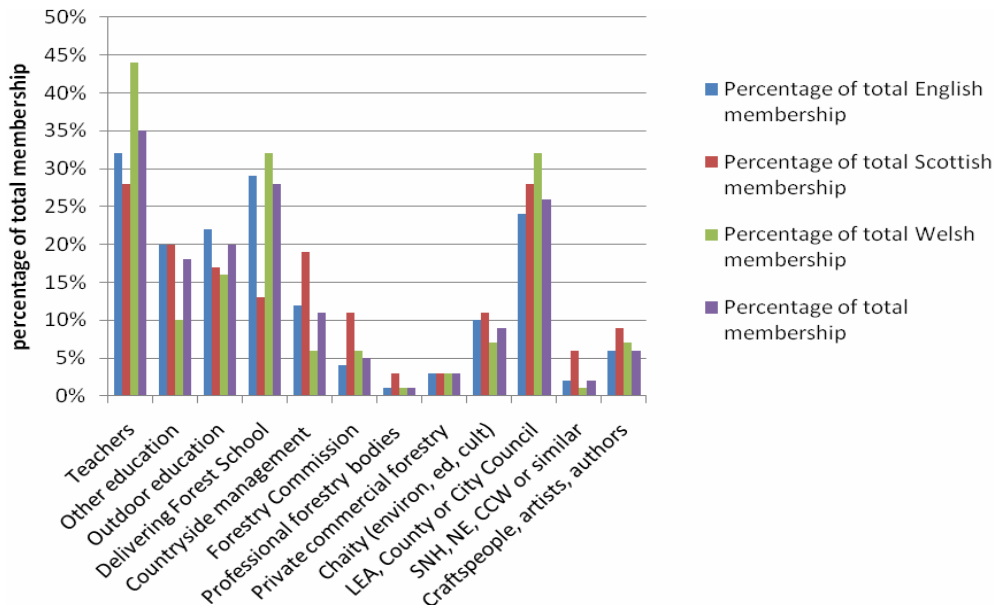
As Figure 3 shows, the cluster group chairs reported that teachers (either currently or recently employed) constituted the largest group within the FEI membership. Only two groups did not have any members who were currently or recently teachers. Overall, around 35%[17] of the members were classed as teachers. However the categories are not mutually exclusive so a person might have classed their occupation as a teacher or working for a Local Education Authority.

A further 10-20% of the total membership has other formal education related employment; for instance as Active Schools Coordinators, Local Education Authority education staff, or the education officers of charities.

The cluster groups reported that across GB 20% of the membership is involved in delivering some form of outdoor education that is either paid (e.g. Field Studies Educator) or voluntary (e.g. Scout leader). There was little variation in the proportion between the countries. There is involvement in the FEI by the bodies and organisations which manage or use the natural environment for amenity, environmental or enterprise reasons. All but one of the respondents reported members who were currently employed as countryside rangers, park wardens or in a similar role. In total 157 FEI members had such employment (11% of the total). A further 33 (or 2% of the total) members are employed by Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Authority or similar.

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[17] Percentage of total GB membership

The FC was also represented amongst the cluster group membership. Across GB a total of 70 FC employees were members (5%) of cluster groups who responded to the survey. Proportionally there is greatest involvement in Scotland, where 26 FC employees account for 12% of the total membership and the least in England where 25 FC employees make up 3% of the membership with 19 in Wales making up 6% of the group membership. Eleven of the cluster groups reported having no FC members, nine of which were in England.

In total there were 36 members employed within the private and commercial forestry sector (amongst the 44 cluster groups) who accounted for 3% of the total membership in each country. However 35 groups had no representation from the private or commercial forestry sector (11 in England, 10 in Scotland and 4 in Wales).

The majority of the cluster groups have members who were employed by environmental, educational or cultural charities; just 5 of the 44 groups who responded to the survey request had no members employed by charities. Similarly the majority of the cluster groups had members who were artists, craftspeople, authors or similar.

3.4.3 Motivations for membership of the FEI

The survey respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of a number of factors when considering their motivation for membership of FEI, they were also asked to detail any further factors in an open ended section. Table 11 and Appendix 7 show the results of the ranking question; the table also contains a column with the 'very important' and 'import' categories combined, this allows for a different understanding of the relative importance.

Table 11: Motivations for membership of the FEI

Motivation	Important * count and %	Very important and important			Very important count	Impor-tant count	Neutr-al count	Not importa-nt count
		Eng	Scot	Wales				
Opportunities to network regionally	40 (93%)	95%	92%	100%	23	17	3	0
Opportunities to access funding for educational activities	39 (91%)	91%	77%	100%	28	11	4	0
Support for Forest School delivery	39 (88%)	86%	92%	89%	24	15	5	0
Forest School training	38 (88%)	86%	85%	89%	21	17	5	0
To further knowledge/expertise in education regarding TWF	33 (76%)	77%	77%	67%	12	21	10	0
Support for other educational delivery	31 (72%)	59%	85%	78%	17	14	9	3
Support for other	28 (65%)	55%	77%	67%	8	20	14	1

		Very important and important				Impor-tant count	Neutr-al count	Not importa-nt count
educational training								
Opportunities to network nationally	24 (55%)	45%	62%	67%	7	17	17	2
Membership of nationally recognised organisation	23 (54%)	59%	38%	56%	2	21	17	2
Access to classroom materials and resources	22 (51%)	32%	69%	67%	4	18	19	2

* Combined 'very important' and 'important' categories.

The combined results (first column of Table 11) show that opportunities for regional networking, opportunities for accessing funding and support for Forest School training and delivery, were considered to be of particular importance by those who responded to the survey.

Opportunities for regional networking were considered to be of greater importance than national opportunities. Whilst the same number of respondents ranked both regional and national opportunities as either 'important' or 'very important', a far greater proportion ranked regional opportunities to be 'very important'. The open-ended responses provide an understanding of what aspects of the regional networking the chairs found useful. Of particular importance were the opportunities to support each other's educational activities:

> *Support each other in delivery of outdoor activities and Forest School (W).*
> *To get together and discuss barriers and issues and ways that individually and as a group we can overcome them (S).*
> *Sharing practice, updates (E).*
> *To create links between schools and organisations who can help schools to get children out to the woods (E).*

Other respondents stated that opportunities to make contact and build relationships with the FC and others in the forestry and environmental sector were also an important motivation:

> *To work with the timber industries to convince them that their long term recruitment and retention targets can be assisted by supporting FEI and Forest School (S).*
> *Provide opportunities for schools and community in the area to link with woods via... Develop links with countryside and local rangers... (S).*

The results also suggest that membership of a nationally recognised organisation was more important for England cluster groups (59%) than for Wales (56%) and Scotland 38%).

As can be seen in Table 11 two of the key motivations for belonging to the FEI related to Forest School; support for the delivery of Forest School through the FEI ranked as the third highest. Opportunity for Forest School training is also clearly of importance. Furthermore very few of the respondents were 'neutral' about Forest School related opportunities and support and none considered it to be unimportant, this was the case even amongst those who did not deliver Forest School and had very little focus on the programme. The importance of Forest School was reinforced by responses to an open ended question:

> *The cluster as a group aims to promote Forest School in the North West,*
> *where there has previously been very little activity (E).*
> *To raise awareness in our area for outdoor education and Forest School*
> *(E).*

Finally respondents' highlighted the importance of promoting the broader value of using trees and woodlands as a context for education and to increase understanding of the timber sector:

> *The mission statement of the group is to increase young people's*
> *understanding of the local and global importance of trees, woodlands,*
> *forest environments, the forestry industry, the timber trade and the wood*
> *products industries... (E).*
> *Promotion of traditional woodland crafts and skills (S).*

3.4.4 Value of FEI membership

The support of fellow cluster group members is one of the factors most valued by the cluster groups with 97% rating it 'very highly or 'highly'' (see Table 12). Wales cluster groups value opportunities to apply for funding more highly than England or Scotland groups and this seems to be corroborated by Wales groups applying for and getting more projects funded.

Table 12: Ratings of the value of the FEI

Value	Highly * count and %	Very highly and highly			Very Highly count	Highly count	Neutral count	Not import-ant count
		Eng	Scot	Wales				
Support of other members of cluster group	41 (97%)	95%	85%	100%	30	11	1	0
Opportunities to apply for funding	37 (88%)	82%	77%	100%	27	10	5	0
Opportunity to attend National Networking Day	37 (88%)	77%	85%	100%	15	22	5	0
Support and expertise of coordinators	36 (87%)	91%	54%	89%	19	17	4	1
Opportunities to learn from other cluster groups experiences	34 (80%)	77%	85%	67%	18	16	8	0
Opportunities for networking with other cluster groups	31 (73%)	68%	77%	67%	13	18	11	0
The information and resources on the website	30 (71%)	82%	54%	56%	9	21	10	2
Opportunities for contact with forestry industry	27 (64%)	59%	46%	78%	12	15	13	2

*Combined 'very highly' and 'highly' categories

87% also thought that the support and expertise of the coordinators and opportunities to learn from other cluster group's (80%) experiences is 'very highly' or 'highly' valuable. Despite these positive findings a number of issues were raised:

> *…I also think there is less support available for London, more events on the website and meetings are held in rural parts of the country… The only way I seem to find out info for the group is by looking at websites myself or through other members (E).*
> *The FEI co-ords are very experienced and knowledgeable but are extremely busy and thinly stretched so I often don't think to ask*
> *FEI coordinator - doesn't always come to meetings, does not let us know if they are coming or not, does not forward updates so can update on his behalf. Some clusters having been to chairs meeting are obviously getting more info than others (W).*

Over 20% (n= 9) rated the resources and information on the website very highly and 48% highly (n=21).

Some of the resources are a bit dated. Approaches from teachers generally look to imaginative and fun activities in an outdoor setting rather than worksheet based exercises. Teachers know how to develop lesson extensions in the classroom (S).
Don't rate the resources and info currently on FEI website - out of date, a maze and too paper based (E).

Sixty four percent rated the opportunities for contacts with the Forestry industry very highly or highly.

They haven't had a lot impact on our group (E).
No real links with hardcore forestry related organisations -Confor/sawmill (W).

Where the groups reported involvement and experience the perceptions were generally positive:

One of our members works in the Timber Forum and he has contributed greatly to various projects throughout the years. Members have been able to learn more about what the timber industry has to offer. We have been able to link the timber industry with construction activities in various schools projects. Being able to have access to timber mills and other forestry related sites has supported children's knowledge and understanding of the processing of wood. Being granted permission to use Forestry Commission Wales land for the purposes of Forest School has greatly enhanced the understanding of biodiversity as well as providing a good example of the differences between conifer and broadleaved environments. The educators within the group have been able to create resources which enhance the understanding of timber processing which has impacted on the children's learning (W).
Funding, knowledge of the sector and access to a sawmill for visits. The cluster would not have taken off if it had not been supported by the local social enterprise who provided funding and has over the years pushed for schools to use local woodlands Forestry Commission has also been available to enable schools to use their woodlands (S).
The links have been key to our continuing success in that we now have a strong partnership approach and are working to shared aims (S).

Links with the forestry industry also facilitated access to woodland:

Facilitated access to woodlands and forests for outdoor education activities and development of local woodlands as education tools.

Matched woodland owners up with teachers/leaders. Children have been out and now know more about woodlands and the processes (S).

And to other resources and funding:

It has helped link schools together with people who can provide sites and/or materials that can be used for Forest School (E).
We use the offices of Coed Cymru for our meetings which is good as they are free! (W).

Others reported that the links with forestry industries and organisations facilitated networking and promoted the group.

Dialogue between different groups leading to new partnerships (S).
A local tree safety company learnt about Forest School during a training course we ran and has now produced a safety audit and management plan with FS in mind - and will have more specialist knowledge for future audits across the Northwest area (E).

3.4.5 Cluster group's experiences of the FEI

The survey asked the respondents to rate their experiences of a number of aspects of FEI, the results can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13: Rating experience of various aspects of the FEI

Experience	Excellent /good count and %*	Excellent and good			Excellent count	Good count	Adequate count	Poor count
		Eng	Scot	Wales				
Level of support from FEI coordinators	27 (65%)	64%	46%	78%	16	11	7	5
Applying for Partnership Fund project funding	19 (51%)	36%	38%	67%	6	13	6	6
Contact with FEI coordinators	18 (43%)	73%	38%	78%	18	10	8	3
Availability and access to resources	18 (43%)	32%	38%	56%	1	17	16	4
Administration of the Partnership Fund	15 (43%)	32%	31%	44%	4	11	8	3
Support and interaction with other cluster groups	17 (41%)	32%	46%	22%	16	11	7	5
Use of FEI website	16 (40%)	41%	38%	0%	0	16	15	8
Opportunities for networking within the FEI	14 (36%)	41%	38%	44%	0	14	21	3
The resources on the FEI website	14 (36%)	32%	54%	0%	1	13	21	3

As the combined column ('excellent' and 'good') shows, the majority reported good experiences of the levels of support from the coordinators (65% of the total respondents). Comments support this.

> I think very highly of the England Coordinator. She is very knowledgeable and supportive within the capacity she is working in. As a result, we know she is trying her very best; however, we believe that is very unfair that FEI expects her to cover and support such a large area and population on her own. Some other areas within the UK get far more support as they have more than one Coordinator and have less population (E).

Around half the respondents also reported that they had had good experiences of applying for, and of the administration of the partnership fund (51% and 43% combined 'excellent' and 'good' respectively). However not all had had entirely positive experiences, with six rating their experiences as 'poor' and one commenting:

> It would have been nice to have some feedback on our Partnership Fund project. The final report wasn't requested (even though it was delivered a bit later than it should have been) and I never even heard that it had been received (S).

Echoing points made earlier, the respondents reported less positive experiences in relation to opportunities for networking (61% n=24 of the respondents) rated this as either 'adequate' or 'poor').

> We would like more interaction with other cluster groups (E).
> We have little or no knowledge of what other clusters are doing or contact with them. A regional newsletter and a part-time regional coordinator would be good to help make stronger links with neighbouring clusters (W).

Similarly respondents' reported less positive experiences of the resources on the website[18] (61% n=24 of the respondents) rated this as either 'adequate' or 'poor' and the use of the website (57% n=23 of the respondents) rated this as either 'adequate' or 'poor').

> Many of the resources are superb but not age applicable. The vast majority of our Forest School work is with three year olds, so ideas rather than resources are of most use (W).

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[18] Survey was undertaken before the website was updated in late 2010

FEI website is in particular need of revamp which I understand is already underway. It needs to be clear what its purpose is and who its audience is (S).

3.4.6 Cluster group activities

Meetings

On average the cluster groups meet once every two to five months. The average frequency of meetings was the lowest in Scotland (meeting once every six months) and cluster groups in England and Wales meet on average once every two to five months. The cluster groups reported that the average length of their meetings is two hours (with no variation between the countries).

Cluster group activity types

Open text responses[19] describing cluster group's activities were received from each of the 44 respondents. The responses were coded into eight categories, the results of which can be seen in Figure 4, this is followed by examples of the different activity types.

Figure 4: Count of cluster groups carrying out activity types (this is not the time groups spend on these activities but the number of groups that mentioned they were carrying them out)

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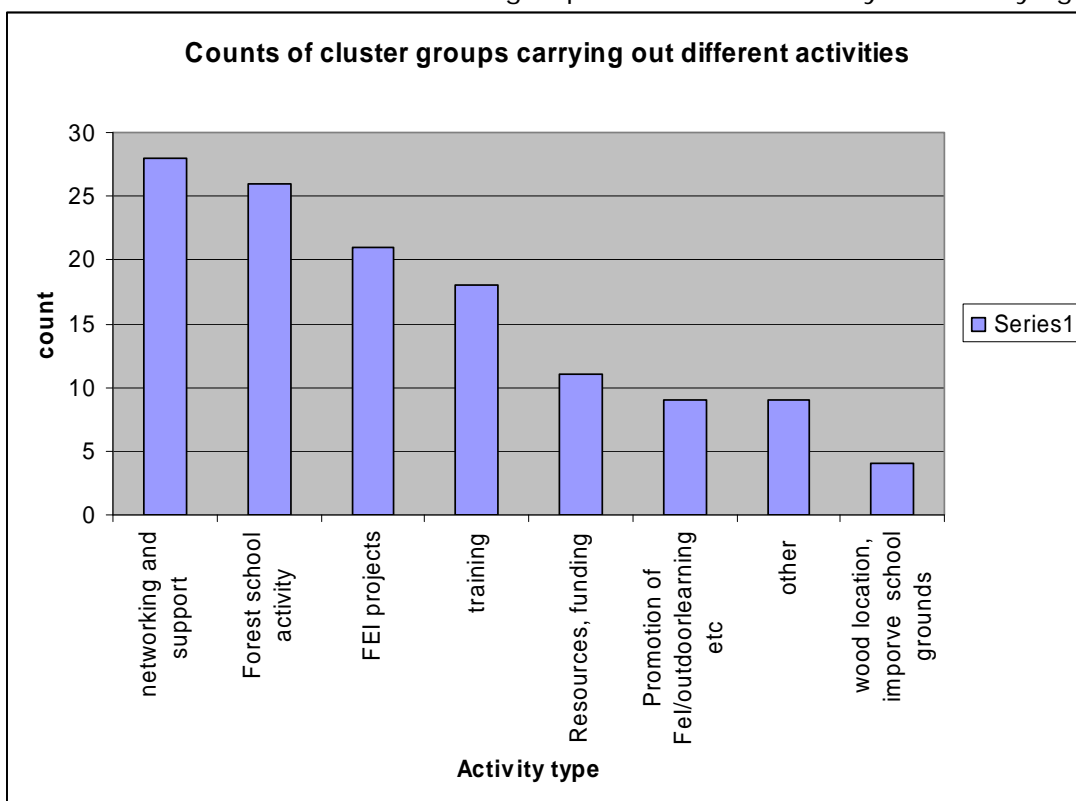
[19] Respondents were asked to describe their groups activities

Networking and support was mentioned most frequently followed closely by Forest School activity which could includes delivery, networking about Forest School, or training related to Forest School. A quantitative question about Forest School was also asked and this provides probably a more accurate figure of the amount of time spent on FS (see 3.4.7). The respondents' reported as important networking within the clusters, between clusters and with other related organisations.

> *Networking, sharing of best practice, supporting each other, developing knowledge and interest in FS locally...being a support point for newly qualified leaders and existing who want to share practice and ideas etc (E).*
> *In the Borders FEI is a pool of educational individuals and groups with a common interest. Each mainly operate within their own capacity and events are recognised as coming from the individual organisations but supported by the Cluster (S).*
> *We respond to the needs of the members of the group whether that be for training purposes, networking, skill sharing etc. The group meets 5 times a year with the aim to share knowledge, skills and ideas for community projects (W).*

FEI funded projects were mentioned by 21 groups which described activities surrounding the planning and delivery of the various projects.

> *Planning and delivering FEI and other funded projects (W).*
> *...discussions around and delivery of new project as a result of more FEI partnership funding (E).*
> *So far we have acquired funding and bought a tools resource kit for use in Forest School and outdoor ed. activities (S).*

Twenty six groups mentioned carrying out Forest School activity.

> *The group has become a focus for Forest School practitioners for support and advice (E).*
> *Having attended the recent FS QuiF training many of us are using this to evaluate our delivery and practice (E).*

Many of the cluster groups' activities were reported to be related to training; this ranged from the provision of workshops within the group, attendance of professional development days at further education colleges to CPD.

> *to run free training workshops for other cluster members according to their expertise (W).*

Until recently we have been entirely self sufficient, running our own workshops using volunteer members to increase the skills base of other interested members… would like to run a training project on using tools as a refresher for our members who have highlighted this as an area they would like more help with(E).

Eleven of the groups mentioned activities related to identifying and accessing funding and resource opportunities.

Grassroots funding bid granted recently …purchasing of resources such as waterproofs and wellies as a communal resource (E).
accessing funding for equipment (S).
funding of equipment and resources (W).

The active promotion of outdoor education (including Forest School) was mentioned by nine groups.

- promoting learning and experiences outdoors which increase knowledge and respect and enjoyment of environment AND provide health benefits AND encourage links between communities and schools, e.g. through projects involving different user groups of parks and woodlands (E).
We have secured funding to employ a Forest Education Development officer… Their main focus is to facilitate delivery of woodland education by schools, communities in their local woodland enabling them to overcome their perceived barriers to using this resource on their own without the need to rely upon mainly local authority ranger services (S).
Funding is now secured to run a Forest School programme with a selected school and aims to:…raise the profile and demonstrate the benefits of the programme within education/health and other interested groups and organisations (S).

3.4.7 Forest School

According to the cluster group estimates, some 387 individual FEI cluster members are currently delivering Forest School[20] across GB (28% of the total membership), the greatest proportion of which come from Wales and England with 32% and 29% of the total country membership (of groups who responded to the survey) respectively. The numbers are lower in Scotland, where just 13% are reported to be delivering Forest School. Just three of the cluster groups, who answered this question, indicated that none of their members are currently delivering Forest School. Table 14 shows the average

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[20] Whether through or associated with the FEI or not

percentage of time reported to be spent on Forest School related networking, delivery, training in England, Scotland and Wales.

Table 14: Approximate cluster group time devoted to Forest School (including networking, delivery and training)

Percentage of time related to	**England %**	**Scotland %**	**Wales %**	**GB %**
Total time	67	65	71	68[21]

Total activity relating to Forest School

On average, across GB, 68% of cluster group activity was reported to be connected to Forest School. The average percentage was highest in Wales (71%) and lowest in Scotland (65%). What this does illustrate is that much FEI activity is related to Forest School. The three groups reporting that none of their activity is related to Forest School, were English. Nine groups reported that Forest School accounted for 100% of their FEI cluster group activity (6 English cluster groups (London south west, North west, Blackdown Hills, Cheshire, Bristol, Bath and West, Staffordshire), 2 Scottish (North and West Argyll, East Lothian) and 1 Welsh (Merthyr Tydfil). A further 19 reported that Forest School accounted for 70-90% of their activity (9 groups in England; 5 groups in Scotland and 5 groups in Wales.

Forest School training, delivery and networking

Outlined below are the numbers undertaking training, delivery and networking (this includes only those groups who responded to these questions).

Forest School training:
- Eight groups stated doing no Forest School training
- The majority spend 10-30% of their total cluster groups activity on training (25 of the 40 groups answering this question)
- Six groups reported that 40-60% of their FEI activity is related to Forest School training.

Forest School delivery:
- Eight groups reported that they do not deliver any Forest School through their involvement in FEI (5 English cluster groups, 2 Scottish and 1 Welsh)
- Nine of the 42 groups to answer this question devote 50-80% of their FEI activity to Forest School delivery,

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[21] There are some discrepancies between the total percentage figures given on Forest School and the breakdown percentages by training, delivery, and networking. Some respondents estimated the time spent on different FS activities then when these were added together they came to more than 100%. Respondents may have interpreted the question differently.

- For the majority (24 groups) 10-40% of their activity is delivery of Forest School.

Forest School networking:
- Just two of the cluster groups (both English) reported no Forest School related networking
- Three groups reported that 80-100% of their activity is related to Forest School networking all of which are English
- For the majority of the groups (32 of the 42 who answered this question) Forest School networking accounts for 10-50% of their total activity.

The responses given to the open-ended element of this question give greater detail of the cluster group's relationship with Forest School. A number of respondent's were quite clear that their group focuses predominantly or even solely on Forest School:

> *Impio is very Forest School focused. All of the regulars are running Forest School, use its meetings as a place to come and discuss Forest School (W).*
> *The Cluster Group formed solely to support the development of Forest Schools within the Rochdale area (E).*

Other groups are actively working to promote and encourage Forest School in their area:

> *We have had a singular aim since the group was established to introduce, Forest School into the area (S).*
> *Forest School is not active in Ayrshire. Attempts to engage education authorities and motivated individuals have had only limited success. Further focused effort planned in 2010 and as such the proportion of cluster group activity associated with Forest School in Ayrshire may well increase significantly (S).*
> *Yes the group initially started to help the development of Forest School delivery in this area (W).*

Despite the importance and prevalence of Forest School some groups are trying to distance themselves from the programme to some degree:

> *… we are trying to steer away from focusing directly on Forest School, more than this we are trying to focus on a more generic use of woodlands as an educational resource. With Forest School as the gold standard which schools can aim for if they choose (S).*
> *FEI has become so involved in Forest School that people no longer know the difference between FEI and FS! Since setting up the FEI group in the*

Dean, I deliberately haven't mentioned FS because I think that the FEI should be about other things too (E).

3.4.8 Partnership funded project activities

The project descriptions of the 66 partnership funded project reports received by the authors were used to understand the range of types of activities funded by FEI. Each project description was analysed and then categorised into one or more of the nine broad activity types and Figure 5 (and Appendix 8) show the results. It is acknowledged that these figures may be somewhat misleading as they were derived from short project descriptions which may not have described the project in full.

Figure 5: Partnership fund project activity types 2003-2009
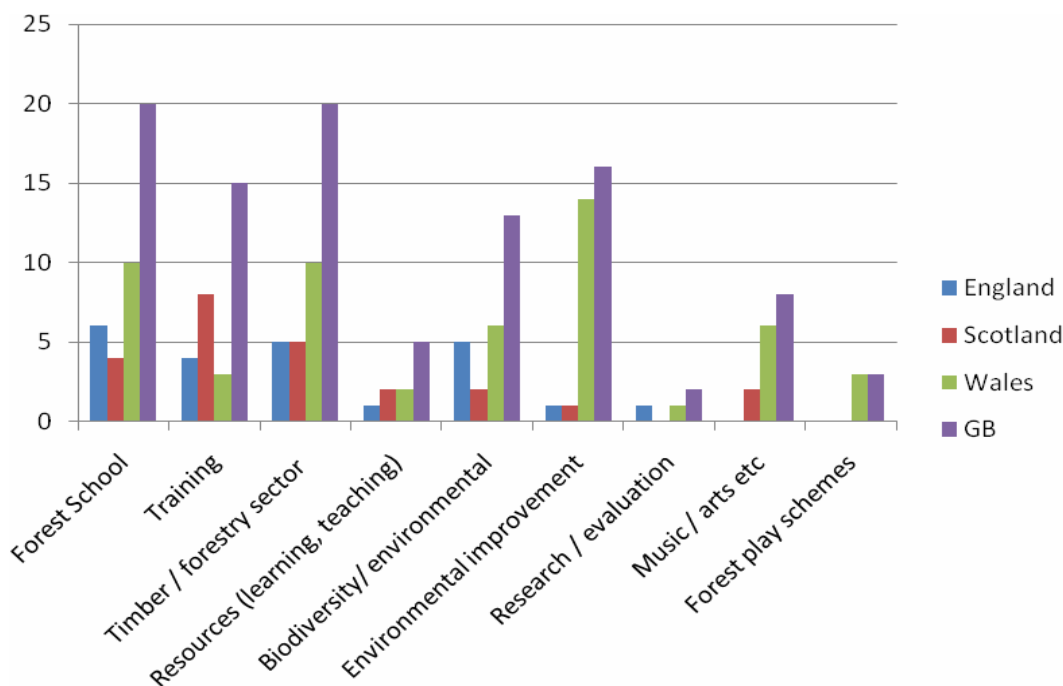
The results indicate that the most common project types that the FEI has funded relate to Forest School and to other timber and forestry sector projects. Examples of the latter included the project at Ysgol Stryd y Rhos and Ysgol Pen Barras (project number 240) which aimed:

> *...to develop existing small woodland area on shared campus to educate and foster understanding of trees, sustainability and management of forests. Developed programme with local business man who will lead planting sessions, chainsaw demonstrations.*

The 'Forests to Furniture' (project number 164) was another example of a timber/forestry sector project; its objectives were described as:

> *Run pilot project with 2 local schools to develop knowledge of relationship between woods and wood products. To develop a project that can be delivered by other cluster groups. Raise awareness of economic importance of woods and need for sustainable woods.*

Sixteen of the 66 projects included some environmental improvement, examples included the 'Undercover' project at an Anglesey primary school (project number 191), the project was described as:

> *Project designed to contribute to construction of new vegetable gardens in Llanilar School and to give children the experience of woodlands.*

The Glyncornel Outdoor Classroom (project number 127) was a further example of a project focused on environmental improvement:

> *Project involved local schools and international volunteers in creating a sheltered outdoor classroom facility at Glyncornel Environmental Centre. Use of locally sourced timber supplies, artists and contractors and used to deliver National Curriculum linked Env Edu and FS to local schools/communities.*

Other projects included biodiversity and environmental aspects, such as the Ysgol Bro Cernym Woodland Project (number 163) which aimed to:

> *to provide opportunity for the children to connect with their wooded environment to develop a sense of responsibility for environment.*

Fifteen projects had elements of training. These ranged from Forest School training to more broad skills development projects. The 'Involve and Inspire: Abraichan Forest Trust' project was an example of the latter which involved:

> *working with groups of vulnerable young people. They participated in specific skills development tasks within the community - designing and building an outdoor FS shelter, training with a drystone waller.*

3.4.9 Reasons for using particular approaches

The cluster groups reasons for using the various common approaches was explored. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they used particular activities for specific outcomes, the results can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15: Reasons for using particular approaches (all of the groups did not respond to this question)

Reason	FEI outdoor education activity	Forest School	Other outdoor programme or activity	Visit to forestry related site or organisation	Classroom based resources	Community events	Networking / training events
Educational outcomes	19 59%	30 75%	22 65%	12 46%	16 64%	12 39%	27 71%
To improve environmental knowledge and behaviour	24 75%	33 83%	26 76%	11 42%	10 40%	22 71%	25 66%
For psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes	17 53%	36 90%	22 65%	6 23%	4 16%	9 29%	14 37%
To improve people's perceptions of learning or school	14 44%	23 58%	15 44%	4 15%	6 24%	11 35%	21 55%
To increase knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products	13 41%	14 35%	10 29%	14 54%	6 24%	17 55%	21 55%

FEI outdoor educational activities

- Such activities funded by the Partnership Fund are most commonly used to improve environmental knowledge and behaviour (75%) and least commonly to increase knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products (41%)

Forest School

- Forest School is most commonly used for psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes (90%), it is least commonly used to increase knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products (35%).

Other outdoor programme or activities

- As with the FEI outdoor approaches these types of activity (not funded by FEI) are predominantly used to improve environmental knowledge and behaviour (76%) and least commonly to increase knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products (9%)

Visit to forestry related site or organisation

- The most common reason for using visits to forestry sites or organisations was to increase knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products.

Classroom based resources

- 64% reported using classroom based resources for educational outcomes.

Community events

- The most common reason for using community events was to improve environmental knowledge and behaviour (71%), the least common reason was for psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes (29%).

Networking/training events

- Such events were primarily used for educational outcomes (71%).

The most common approaches used to increase knowledge of forestry and associated products and industries were community events (55%), networking (55%) and visits to forestry related sites (54%). Forest School was the most common approach used to improve perceptions of and attitudes to school and learning (58%), conversely few of the respondents' reported using visits to forestry sites for this reason (15%). Again Forest School was the most commonly used approach for psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes (90%), to improve environmental knowledge and behaviour (83%) and educational outcomes (75%).

3.4.10 Participant numbers

Participant numbers proved to be difficult to ascertain. Two sources of data were used:

1) the survey of the cluster groups (Table 16)
2) the FEI Partnership Fund project reports (Table 17).

Both figures appear to be somewhat unreliable and unlikely to give a true or full indication of total FEI participant numbers. This is because in the survey respondents were asked to estimate how many people had participated in each year in FEI activities. It is not clear what records they could draw on to arrive at these answers. The numbers in both Tables 16 and 17 show counts of people involved but this does not reflect the quality of the activities. For example Forest School often focuses on small numbers of participants while a community event may reach hundreds; one approach is not better than the other they are both different with differing objectives.

Table 16: Participant numbers[22] from previous years

Participant numbers	England	Median	Scotland	Median	Wales	Medi-an
Number of groups responding for 2009	13		12		8	
Total participants 2009	3889	100	1932	132	8955	170
Number of groups responding for 2008	10		8		8	
Total participants 2008	2045	32	989	100	6680	150
Number of groups responding for 2007	9		6		7	
Total participants 2007	1710	35	1356	175	5578	150
Number of groups responding for 2006	2		5		6	
Total participants 2006	1200	200	3524	162	1510	130
Number of groups responding for 2005	0		5		6	
Total participants 2005	0		527	82	1362	66
Number of groups responding for 2004	1		3		6	
Total participants 2004	150	150	1765	100	1505	140
Number of groups responding for 2003	0		1		4	
Total participants 2003	0		1600	1600	365	75

The total number of participants in the years from 2003-2009 is estimated to be 46,642 (Table 16).

The FEI Partnership Funded project reports were also examined and the results are displayed in Table 17, these suggest that between 2003 and 2009 some 38,237 people participated in the projects that the authors had access to (60 reports out of 66 provided numbers). These numbers cover only half the projects that were funded during that time period. Not all of these were final reports some were interim reports and therefore some of these numbers were estimates of how many people the projects hoped to reach. England provided reports for 42% of funded projects, Scotland 57% and Wales 49%.

Table 17: Partnership funded project participant numbers

Participant category	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
No. Teachers involved	37	46	148	231
No. Teachers trained	68	28	153	249
No. Teachers involved in delivery	122	624	240	938
No. Individuals trained	284	195	634	1113
No. Pre-school groups	15	72	14	98
No. Primary Schools involved	202	129	273	604
No. Secondary students involved	9	23	11	43
No. of Tertiary students involved	9	36	70	115

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[22] Participants were asked to estimate the number of participants the members of their cluster group had worked with and to count any repeated contact just once.

Participant category	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
No. students	1448	13261	3782	18503
No. of students visiting woodland	8038	2684	2282	13004
No. of students visiting mill/plant	557	270	640	1467
No. Volunteers/parents involved	366	741	409	1516
No. of individuals with disabilities	33	39	27	99
No. of BME Individuals	147	29	81	257

Partnership Funded project partners

The Partnership Funded project reports also supply details of the organisations (both lead and partner) involved in the planning and delivery of the projects. These were categorised into one of 12 categories, Figure 6 and 7 detail the results. It was not always easy to categorise the organisations i.e. some community groups may have been charities. Some Community Forests are charities while others are government partnerships. What is clear is that a wide range of organisations are involved in FEI funded projects.

Figure 6: Lead organisation/s or individuals
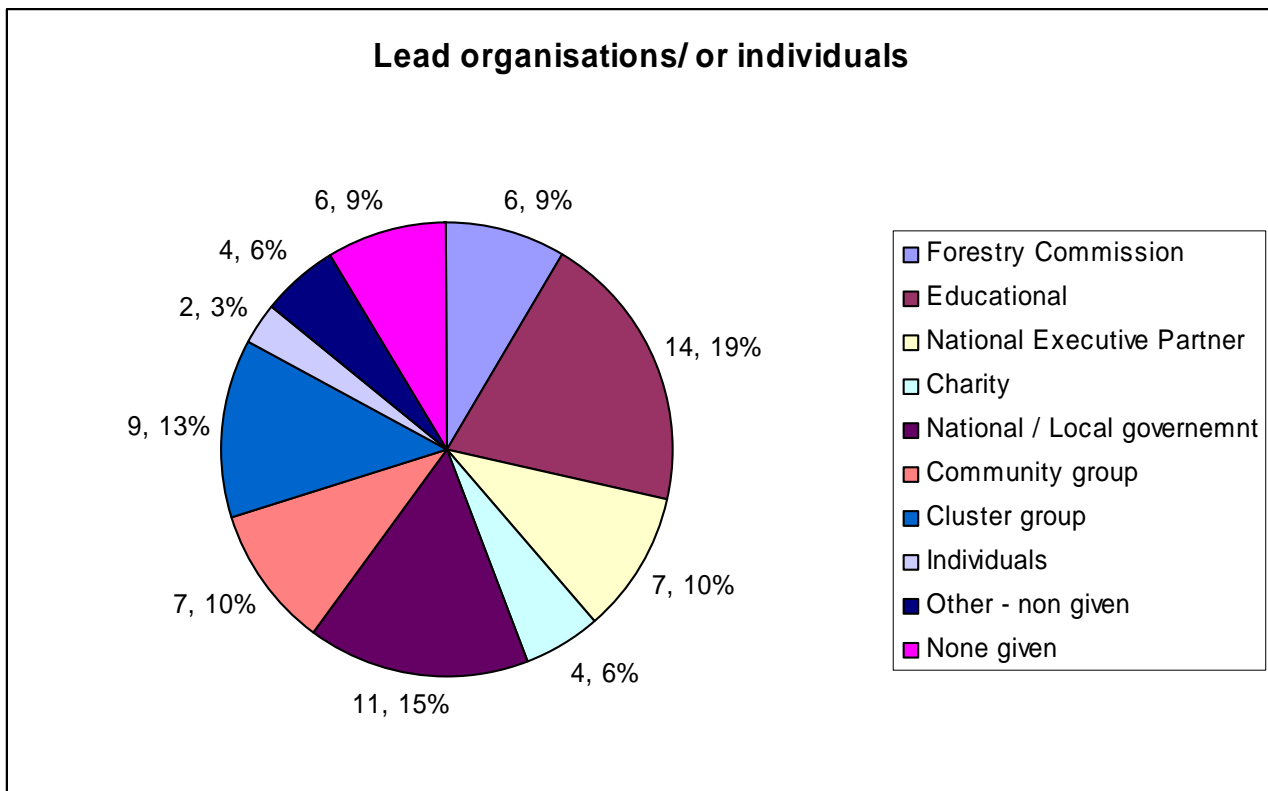
Figure 7: Partner organisation/s or individuals

Partner organisation/s or individuals
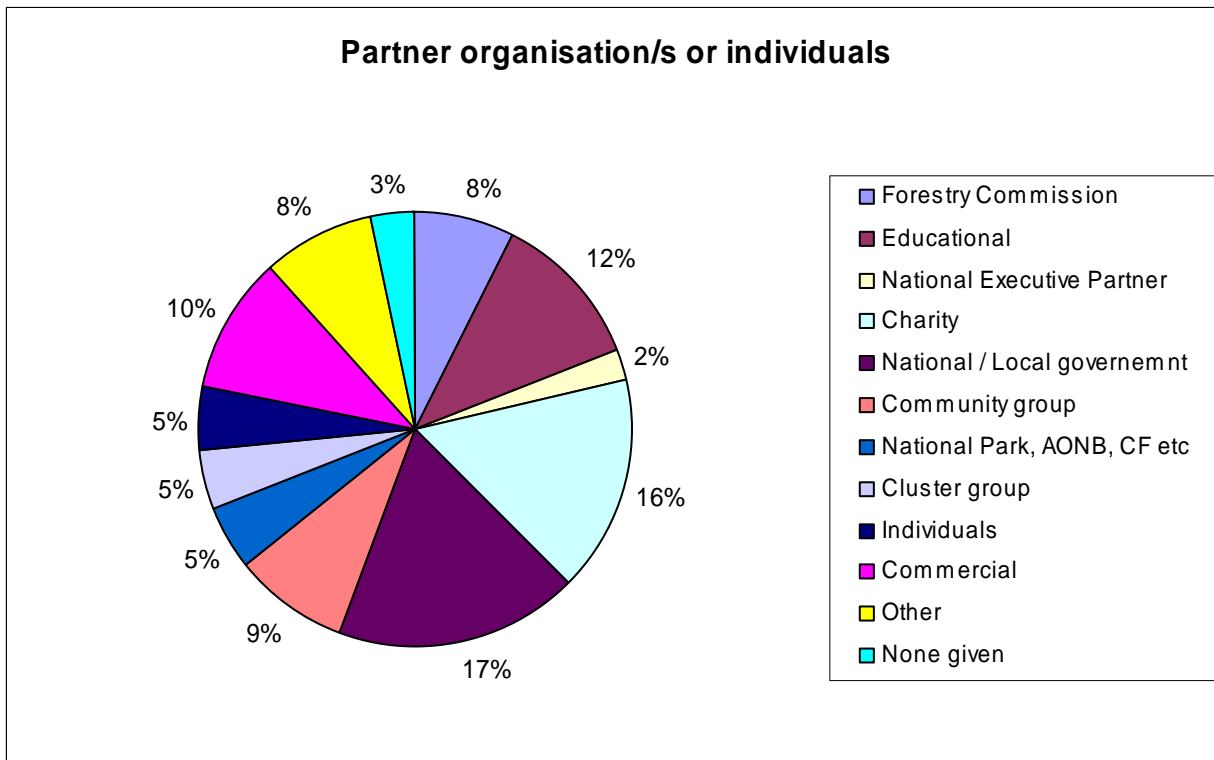
Educational (e.g. University, college, learning alliance) and national/local government organisations (councils countryside services. supporters of Community Forests) are the most common lead organisations according to the Partnership Fund project reports. Cluster groups have also been the lead for a number of projects. Seven of the 66 projects were led by one of the FEI national executive partners. National/local government organisations and charities (national and local e.g. National Trust, Wildlife Trust) were the most commonly listed partner organisations. Commercial organisations included organisations such as British Airways, B&Q, Touchwood Enterprises and Ecotox.

3.4.11 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of cluster group activities and outcomes

Of the 38 who responded to the question on monitoring and evaluation of FEI activities 26 indicated that they 'always or sometimes' record the outcomes of their activities, 12 reported that they did not (Table 18).

Table 18: Recording outcomes

Record outcomes of activities?	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
Yes – always or sometimes	15	5	6	26
No	2	7	3	12
Number answering question	18	11	9	38

The methods used by the cluster groups include:

> *Evaluation forms… (E).*
> *Feedback forms from teachers. High point/low point verbal feedback from participants…(S).*
> *…observations, reflective work discussions with colleagues (E).*
> *Many of the members working in schools complete evaluations on plans, do observations, conduct small case studies and use dictaphone, photographs and video to document participant's learning. A few give out questionnaires to participants/parents and ask guest visitors to evaluate their sessions (E).*

The respondent's reported that the monitoring and evaluation activity focused on a number of outcomes and indicators:

> *…the County Council have commissioned several evaluative reports on Forest School and the impact it has, particularly on how it has affected Foundation Stage Profile Scores. Other projects have their own evaluative systems embedded within the projects e.g. comparing attitudes before and after training schemes (E).*
> *As a cluster group, we record the outcomes / impacts of projects funded by FEI …to document participant's learning (E).*
> *We assess the success of any project and it's impact on the community… (W).*
> *We always evaluate Forest School and will assess other projects against how well they met their objectives (S).*

Some groups reported basic or no monitoring and evaluation:

> *Only in minutes of meetings (E).*
> *We are very hands off - we try and enable schools and groups and then do not demand much information back off them (S).*

3.4.12 Observed positive impacts

The cluster groups were asked to indicate whether they had observed any positive impacts following the use of the FEI various approaches (both FEI funded and non funded), the result can be seen in Table 19. Responses are similar to those given in Table 15 on the reasons given for using particular approaches.

Table 19: Observed positive impacts of activities and programmes (not everyone responded to this question)

	FEI outdoor education activity	Forest School	Other outdoor programme or activity	Visit to forestry related site or organisation	Classroom based resources	Community events	Networking / training events
Educational outcomes	16 59%	22 69%	21 68%	11 34%	12 46%	8 31%	21 68%
Environmental knowledge and behaviour	16 59%	25 78%	21 68%	8 25%	10 38%	15 58%	21 68%
Psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes	14 52%	26 82%	17 55%	6 19%	4 15%	8 31%	11 35%
People's perceptions of learning or school	11 41%	25 78%	14 45%	6 19%	7 27%	11 42%	12 39%
Knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products	12 44%	14 44%	8 26%	14 44%	6 23%	14 54%	15 48%

FEI outdoor educational activities

- 59% reported that they had observed positive outcomes related to educational outcomes and to environmental knowledge and behaviours following the use of FEI outdoor educational approaches.

Forest School

- The most common positive outcome reported by respondents following the use of Forest School were those relating to psychological, emotional or behavioural factors (82%). Forest School was also considered to have positive impacts on environmental knowledge and behaviour and for people's perceptions of school and learning (both 78%).

Other outdoor programme or activities

- Other forms of outdoor learning were reported to result in positive impacts on educational outcomes and on environmental knowledge and behaviour (both 68%). Few considered that they had had positive impacts on people's knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products (26%).

Visit to forestry related site or organisation

- The most common positive outcome following visits to forestry sites or organisations was an increased knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products; 44% reported such an outcome.

Classroom based resources

- 46% reported that the classroom based resources had positive educational outcomes, however just 23% reported that it increased knowledge of forestry and associated industries and products.

Community events

- 58% of respondents reported that community events had positive impacts on environmental knowledge and behaviour and 54% reported that they had increased knowledge of forestry and associated industries.

Networking/training events

- 68% reported positive impacts relating to educational outcomes and environmental knowledge and behaviour following networking and training events.

3.5 Cluster group case studies

To add to and supplement the results from the cluster group survey we decided to explore through interviews a few more details about specific cluster groups to explain how they had developed, how they worked in practice, what they thought made a successful cluster group and what challenges they faced both now and potentially in the future. We chose five cluster groups across GB. The following provides short descriptions of these groups.

3.5.1 Scotland

In Scotland the North East was chosen as a cluster group case study. The North East group has 20 registered members and 10 active members that regularly attend meetings lasting 2-3 hours, once every 2-5 months (Figure 8).

Ten percent of the groups time is devoted to Forest School training, networking and delivery. The group has applied for the £200 grant which they used for running events and a grant scheme.

History and development

The North East cluster group was formed in 1997. It is a particularly active group that has had significant input from other public sector organisations. It is unusual in having a full time FEI development officer (employed by FCS) whose post is funded by FCS, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Enterprise plus some Leader funding which is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme and is aimed at promoting economic and community development in rural areas. A new chair of the group has recently been appointed (the previous chair was a FCS employee) who runs a business delivering training for staff in outdoor learning. The group also has a lot of contact with local authorities and used to have involvement from the private forestry sector, but not at present. The previous chair, who was in post from late 2005 until March 2010, believes

that the new chair will provide important new opportunities to develop different contacts and networks. Most of the members of the cluster group are able to carry out their FEI activities as part of their organisational role.

Figure 8: Backgrounds and employment of North East cluster group members
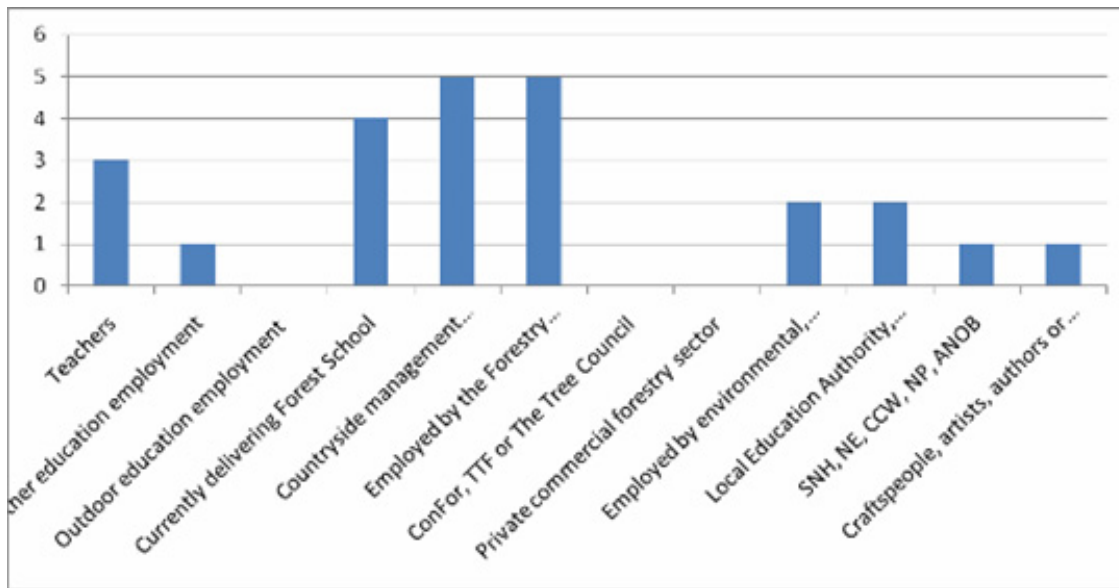
Cluster group activities in practice

The North East cluster group focuses on a specific project which is variously called Forest School, Woodland Learning and Forest Education. The aim is to reach every school in the North East. The chair and development officers[23] were concerned about using the term Forest School as they felt this might act as a barrier to some schools involvement. This is due to the training that is required to deliver Forest School which could be seen as too onerous for some schools who want to take children into the woods but not necessarily deliver Forest School. The group is very keen on schools taking forest education to a level that suits them and if that means training to lead Forest School that is fine but delivering at others levels is also viewed very positively. The idea is for the development officer to engage all local schools to help them deliver forest education to a level of interest to them.

> *I think that is probably why our groups have evolved so much it changes format, it changes ways of doing things because we change what we want to do. I think when we first established it was all about the group running certain activities and events, fairs, shows and things like that as a partnership rather than each individual*

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[23] The original development officer was on maternity leave and the post was filled by two part time officers, it was the two part time officers that were interviewed as part of this review. The original officer is now back in post.

organisation having to go itself. Whereas now I think we've moved on to much more of an advisory and strategic role to take a project to allow schools to take outdoor education on their own. So we do very little if not no delivery at all whereas I think it was more of a deliverer a few years ago. (Previous North East FEI chair)

This group is unusual for a cluster in having a small 'Woods for learning' grant scheme which it administers. Communities, small groups and schools can bid for a maximum of £500. A £5K total is available each year.

The new chair who is an independent education consultant on outdoor learning can bring new education networks and contacts to the cluster group. This chairs role will last for 1 year and then be passed on to someone else. The new chair is considering setting up a nominal charge for membership of the cluster group, as the group has a lot of equipment that members could loan. The idea for this has partly come from the Edinburgh and Lothians cluster group which has started to charge for membership. The chair is also very keen to engage with new partners.

There were concerns from interviewees that FEI is not widely known, although Forest School is and that Forest School seems to be a default focus for much of the FEI activities. New opportunities were seen for FEI in Scotland as part of the Curriculum for Excellence in Outdoor Learning.

We could see things happen in Scotland over the next 5 years that make Scotland the world leader or one of the best in the world in terms of its approach and ethos to taking children outside (North East FEI Chair).

What makes a successful cluster group?
- Enthusiastic individuals who get on and carry out activities
- Good networking
- Have a good aim and carry out a specific activity
- Make sure partners can deliver their objectives through FEI
- People who see roles for themselves and share activities
- People who have FEI within their work role.

What challenges do cluster groups face?
- Securing funding in the longer term for FEI development officer in the North East
- Debate at a cluster group and national level about the role of FS within FEI
- Re-dressing the lack of private sector involvement
- Re-think the FEI brand and how it is named; as Forest School is a more recognisable brand.

3.5.2 England

In England Bolton, Birmingham and Devon were chosen as cluster group case studies. The Bolton group has 37 registered members, 12 are active and 10 regularly attend the meetings. The Birmingham group has 24 registered members, of whom 10 are active and regularly attend meetings. The Devon group has 90 registered members of whom about 70 are active though only ten regularly attend meetings. All three groups meet once every 2-5 months for between 1-2 hours (Figure 9).

The Bolton group devote 60% of their time to Forest School training and a further 20% to Forest School networking. A total of 50% of Devon's time is spent on Forest School related activities and the Birmingham cluster group spend 80% of their time on Forest School delivery.

Both Birmingham and Bolton have previously applied for the £200 grant, Devon has not.

History and development

The Bolton cluster group is reasonably new having been running for approximately 18 months. The £200 grant was gained as a start up fund for the group. There has recently been a change of the chair as the existing chair moved elsewhere for work. The current secretary is able to incorporate some of the FEI role into his work role within the Local Authority.

Figure 9: Backgrounds and employment of Devon, Birmingham and Bolton cluster group members
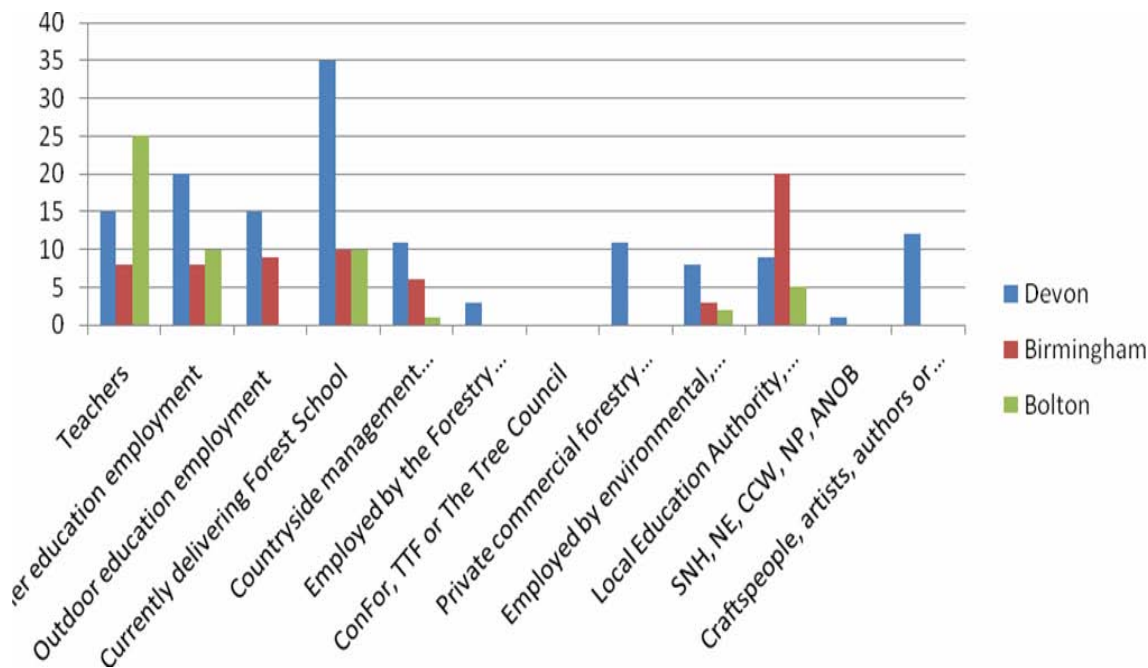
The Birmingham cluster group was set up in 2004. The current chair is acting in a caretaker role for one year and has a background in outdoor education. The group is currently diminished due to local authority rangers (who have been a significant part of the group) no longer participating due to cut backs and this has had a serious impact on the group.

The Devon cluster group in the past was chaired by the South West Forest and is now chaired by the director of the Silvanus Trust which is a charity that works in partnership with those concerned about woodlands. The Devon Forest Schools Network merged with the FEI cluster group as it was finding it difficult to manage its own network. The chair has to fit FEI activity into her role as director of the Silvanus Trust or in her spare time.

Cluster group activities in practice

The Bolton cluster group is focused primarily on Forest School which involves training Forest School leaders and encouraging schools to incorporate Forest School into their schools. The group is always clear to call/brand their activities as FEI Forest School. The group sees an opportunity to make use of the extensive green space within the town for forest education. The group has some contact with the North West cluster group and are involved in a bid for funding with them. The secretary has doubts about future funding as he thinks anything not considered mainstream and classroom based will become marginalised.

The main focus of the Birmingham group has been primarily on Forest School activities. However that is not the only interest of the group:

> *Using the woodland environment in anyway whether that's Forest School, environmental education or bushcraft* (Chair).

A Forest School skills day was recently held although the chair has not yet received feedback from it. The chair is acting in a caretaker role for 1 year before handing over to someone else. Only one person on the group has been there since it was created. The chair is concerned that people think FEI is only about Forest School, she hopes the newsletter she is putting together will encourage more people to join the group. The chair also recently attended the FEI England chairs meeting held in Birmingham and found it useful to share ideas and concerns with the rest of the group.

The membership of the Devon cluster group is mixed, it is not solely focused on Forest School; they have a lot of members who deliver outdoor learning some of which is Forest School. The group has one motivated industry member. The group also has good links with other FEI clusters in the region. The group is essentially an email list and network point of contact for educators; therefore it is easy to get involved in the group without being active. Meetings are mainly dominated by discussions about projects. The chair

believes the group is effective as many people within Devon are interested in outdoor education.

What makes a successful cluster group?

- Enthusiasm of people who give up their time to get involved
- Role of admin/secretary in co-ordination of meetings and communication
- Working together as a team
- The network is an opportunity to connect up different activities
- The group/network brings people together, raises awareness and provides peer support.

What challenges do cluster groups face?

- Dependent on the good will of people to participate
- Where is education going in the next few months with the new government? There are concerns that anything not considered mainstream classroom based will be seen as peripheral
- The capacity of the small organisations involved will affect the future of cluster groups
- Promoting FEI at a local level
- Reaching a wider audience
- Making people aware that FEI is more than Forest School
- Finding new funding
- Finding out what people want from FEI and accommodating everyone's needs.

3.5.3 Wales

In Wales the Ynys Mon group was chosen as a case study. This group has approximately 40 registered members of whom 12 are active and 10 regularly attend the meetings. The group meets once every 2-5 months for around 2 hours (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Backgrounds and employment of the Ynys Mon cluster group members
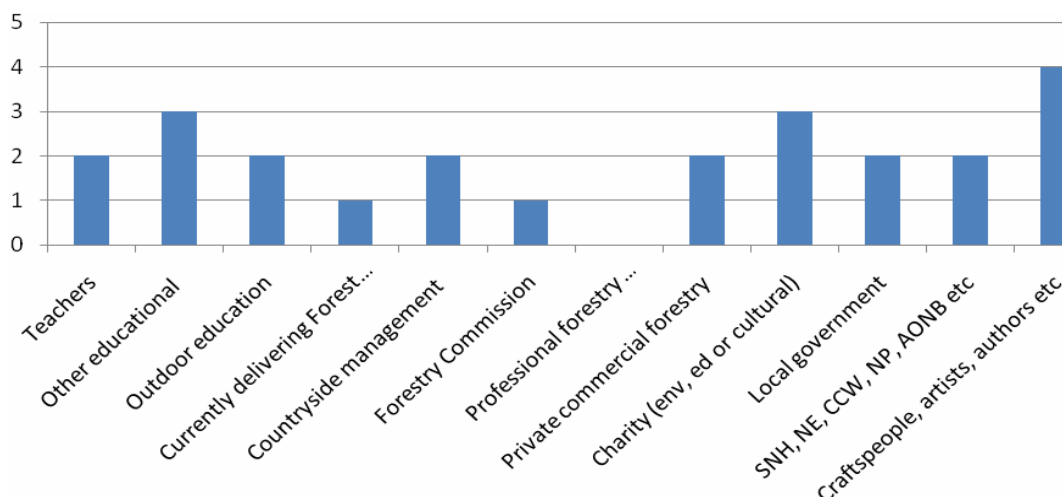
In total around 30% of the group's time is devoted to Forest School, with 10% focused on Forest School training and 20% on related networking activities. The group has made use of a £200 grant for insurance.

History and development

The Ynys Mon cluster group in Anglesey was created in 2006, the current chair can incorporate part of FEI activities into their current work role. The process of constituting the group was thought to be straightforward and easy. An FCW employee acts as secretary for the group and this is thought very useful as it might be difficult to get others to take on this role. The group does not have a specific aim but encourages others to think about woods and to value the environment and associated products.

Cluster group activities in practice

There are about twelve core members of the group who are drawn from across the island and from a range of organisations, about half from NGOs, some woodland activity practitioners and woodland owners but not many teachers. The group uses forest visits to encourage children and through them their parents to see forests as a place to visit. The group has had a couple of funded projects and produced an educational pack aimed at a particular woodland but applicable to others. It has run a pilot willow shelters project with a couple of schools. It has held an education day when schools are invited to Forest School taster days and runs a festival each year.

What makes a successful cluster group?
- Outcomes are helping people to appreciate woods and promote experience of the woodland environment
- Friendly and inclusive group.

What challenges do cluster groups face?
- Finding match funding is always a problem
- Cannot apply for funding for repeat events which is frustrating
- Getting more schools involved.

Overall comments on the cluster groups case studies

The cluster group case studies mainly have a focus on Forest School, but do express concern that this is one approach and that everyone need not train and deliver Forest School. There was an acknowledgement of the need to let schools do what they felt comfortable with and if that meant training to level 3 in Forest School that was good but if schools wanted to deliver forest education then that was also very acceptable. Some groups are thinking about charging for membership; these were the groups who had equipment that they thought members could loan to run activities. Others felt a membership fee would put people off as they are often contributing voluntary time.

Similarities in the challenges groups face include finding funding, promoting or re-branding FEI and debating the role of FS within FEI.

3.6 Future direction

In conducting this review we have drawn on the cluster group survey, interviews and a range of documentation to develop an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing FEI (SWOT).

3.6.1. SWOT Analysis

Strengths and weaknesses relate to current internal factors such as partner and cluster group activities, while opportunities and threats relate to external factors such as the changing economic climate and change in government in 2010 (Table 20, Table 21 and Table 22). We have grouped the SWOT where appropriate into key areas. Strengths can also potentially be weaknesses, for example: a strength of FEI is the stability and continuity FC has given it over the years however this can also be a weakness as the partners and cluster groups rely on FC and are potentially too dependent on it to carry on its role within FEI. The SWOT analysis provides a framework for discussion of the future of FEI and where it should or might be going in the next five years or more.

Table 20: SWOT analysis

Positive factors	Internal factors		Negative or potential to be negative factors
	Strengths	Weaknesses	
	Opportunities	Threats	
	External factors		

Table 21: FEI SWOT Analysis: Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Governance structure • Cluster group structure – bottom up with top down support, allowing people to come together who are enthusiastic. Has flexibility within the system to let these groups rise and fall as interest waxes and wanes. • Creates a network and structure that can be focused on local needs and issues. • The flexibility in the governance structure also allows the FC to have more or less input e.g. greater FC staff involvement in Wales and less involvement in England. Therefore FEI can work with greater or less input from FC staff (Box 1). • A coverage of groups across GB from a starting point of one group 19 years ago, and around 25 groups in 2000 to 80 in late 2010. • FC provides continuity, funding, stability, and some staffing for FEI. • Power in FEI being a GB initiative even through	**Funding** • Funding application – some cluster group members find it confusing, difficult, and too bureaucratic. • Cluster groups have to develop new projects to get funding – leads to tweaking of existing approaches, and does not help those who have developed something successful and want to carry it on. • Some groups reported issues with the speed of communication in relation to funding applications, leading to issues with accessing funds (both FEI and external).

Strengths	Weaknesses
there is devolvement of governance to country level	**Communication**
Funding opportunities	• There seemed to be a lack of knowledge and understanding of FEI, even within those who sit on cluster groups or the steering groups. If there is ambiguity about what FEI is and what it does then communicating with a broader audience in a coherent manner and making it more widely known will be difficult.
• Partnership Fund for groups to bid into and get projects off the ground.	
• Match funding added to Partnership Fund, including in kind support, from a wide range of sources.	
• The Partnership Fund draws in new people and new activities.	
• Cluster groups can potentially charge a nominal fee for membership of the group for individuals, groups, schools etc.	• More local communication events may need to be held to engage with some cluster groups, particularly in England.
People	**Industry involvement**
• Wide range of people it brings together – teachers, rangers etc.	• Less focus on the forestry industry and wood products than in the past – leading to less interest from the forestry sector, reduced funding for core budget.
• Wide and varied knowledge and expertise of cluster group members.	
• Other people/orgs may feel able to get involved more easily because FEI is seen as more independent than FC.	
• Commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of some cluster group members.	• The low levels of industry participation have made meeting Aim 3 of FEI difficult.
• Grassroots approach empowers people to develop new skills and to deliver their own educational activities rather than 'outsourcing'.	**Governance, Partners and FC**
Forest School	• Partners seem to have little input/impact apart from FC.
• Forest School has provided interest in FEI and drawn members into the network and increased the number of cluster groups.	• Too much dependency on FC to drive FEI forward.
Partners	• Steering groups not fully effective and running in each country yet.
• Partners having little active input at a country level which means FC can drive FEI.	• Lack of formal written agreements between partners and between Field Studies Council and FC, although in Wales there is a written agreement between FCW and FSC.
• Variety of partners with different remits.	
Activities	
• People can undertake a wide variety of projects and activities as part of cluster group FEI activities.	
• Adds value to FC education delivery, what FEI delivers would not be as easily delivered through FC core education activities.	• Dependency in Wales on FCW employees running/supporting most of the cluster groups.
• Having local cluster groups means they can reach out to local schools.	• Little data collection happening, e.g. up-to-date cluster group and membership lists.
• FEI activities take place in a variety of woodland owned by a range of bodies e.g. Woodand Trust, private woodlands, community woodlands, local authority woods, public forests.	• Lack of well designed and coordinated monitoring and evaluation of activities and outcomes. Little is known about use of resources -are they value for money?
• FEI activities increase interest, awareness, understanding and experience of forests and forestry.	• Cluster groups in England have less opportunity for direct
Communication	

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Networking opportunities provided by FEI network and networking days – provides link to others, ideas, contacts. Brings people together from across GB. • Independently hosted website – not FC site.	support from a coordinator (and FC) than in Wales and Scotland. **Forest School** • Concerns, ambivalence and debate about the role of FS in FEI – is it too dominant, should it be separate? **Aims** • Focus on forests and woods can potentially narrow the range of FEI in terms (and in comparison to) of broader environmental education. **Branding** • Many activities are run with no mention of FEI e.g. the organisation running the event/activity is mentioned or FS is mentioned

Table 22: FEI SWOT analysis: Opportunities and threats

Opportunities	Threats
Funding • Make application form streamlined and clearer and process easier. It should help when application process is on line. • Publicise FEI to companies to engage with them through funding/resources as a way of developing their corporate social responsibility. **Governance and Partners** • Recruit new partners – more active partners, including FS people. • Collaborate with other organisations focused on outdoor learning or other schemes e.g. eco schools – to add value, avoid duplication of effort. • Sub national focus for England either based on regions or larger areas to provide a forum for networking rather than at the national level. • FEI to become more independent within each country to develop along the most appropriate lines. • Partners to disseminate information about their organisations and activities through FEI. • Focus more on engaging with relevant partners at a country level. • FCW could encourage other cluster groups to form in Wales that are not led or run by FCW staff.	**Governance** • Structure is so flexible that clusters can come and go as FEI is based on volunteers willing to get involved and each group needs a critical mass of core individuals to remain active. • Devolution with each country separate – might make it difficult for decisions that need to be made across GB and for people to remember that it is a GB initiative • Confusion about the difference between FS and FEI and education services delivered by FC and other organisations. • Seen as an FC initiative by partners who sit back and let FC run FEI. • Lack of FEI coordinator capacity in England with only 1 coordinator. **Funding** • FC potentially reducing staff and funding commitment in future. • People join or start a group to get funding and then move on. • Core funding being reduced and Corporate scheme no longer running to bring in more funding to replenish this core fund. • Government cuts will impact civil and public sector workers including FC and

Opportunities	Threats
• Reducing length of time someone is chair from 3 years to 1-2 years. **Communication** • Incorporate Wiki-sites and other social media for individual clusters on the website. Create an FEI facebook page. • Have an FEI figure head to publicise its work – e.g. Chris Packham • Gain public relations support to improve the profile of FEI. • Improve communication across FEI internally. • Make annual reporting more widely known. Produce mini report to be sent to every member. • Develop thematic groups across the clusters to enable more specific networking. **Monitoring and evaluation** • Data collection and strategic data use e.g. pulling together information through project reports etc. to learn and communicate. • Clarify the data collected on the Partnership Fund project report. • Make completion of project reports a requirement for full funding. • Shift from dominant focus on Forest School. • Offer CPD or talks at steering group or chairs meetings to attract attendance.	this will have knock on effects on third sector organistaions and mean those who are involved in FEI as part of their job may not be able to continue that involvement as easily. • Cuts may also make it difficult for cluster groups to find match funding. • Lack of knowledge and expertise at a local level in finding and accessing match funding sources. **Communication** • Difficulties for cluster groups to meet particularly in rural areas where people live long distances away. • Not sufficient profile of FEI. • Lack of knowledge about exactly what the FEI is facilitating, the numbers of people reached/involved and the outcomes of projects (and the initiative as a whole); makes it harder to demonstrate the impacts of the FEI and to justify continued funding. • The 'grey area' of what is and is not FEI activity also threatens the justification of FEI.

3.6.2 Views from interviewees and cluster group survey

Where should FEI go in the future?

Interviewees felt there is potential to move away from a focus on young people to a greater emphasis on other groups, suggestions made include the 16-25 year age grouping, University of the 3rd Age, family groups, and parents. Suggestions were also made about helping older people who wanted to retrain.

In terms of the forest sector ideas for interaction included developing greater connectivity and engagement with the business community, opportunities for the forest products industry to bring a 'good news' story to a younger generation, and a focus on getting major players in the distribution of wood products involved such as Jewson and Travis Perkins.

> *We need to be encouraging bright, young, intelligent people into this business and if we start at a young age and we do some of the things*

> *that, okay the cluster groups are trying to do, and if a few people through that process actually start having enthusiasm and a love affair with nature, materials, sustainability and have a link of relevance to all of that to actually everything else that we need in terms of building construction materials and the rest and actually completes the whole mental circle…. International trade is not just all the science bits, there is a multi million pound a year trading business that is taking wood as a raw material, just as any other commodity but the good bit is we have got actually a renewable resource. And we need to get young people saying 'I'm interested in the environment, I'm interested in sustainability but I'm also interested in business, hang on a minute, doesn't the Timber Trade do all of that? (Coillte).*

Gaining a higher profile nationally was also considered to be an opportunity for the future as well as gaining a presence in Northern Ireland.

In terms of the focus of strategies such as the Curriculum for Excellence for outdoor learning in Scotland it was thought that this provides a real opportunity for FEI and for Scotland as the following quote suggests:

> *We could see things happen in Scotland over the next 5 years that make Scotland the world leader or one of the best in the world in terms of its approach and ethos to taking children outside (NE cluster group chair).*

At the cluster group level there were clear calls for more coordinator support for the groups in Scotland and in England, none of the groups from Wales indicated they needed more support. This is probably due to the 2 education officers supporting the FEI co-ordinator in Wales and the Woods for Learning team:

> *Forestry Commission Scotland's commitment to FEI at a regional level seems to vary considerably. Where there is strong input from FCS or other public sector/social forestry projects clusters seem to be sustainable but where this is not the case there are very distinct peaks and troughs in activity. If full-time professional FEI coordinators are employed to facilitate local activity they should be the point of contact for 'service enquiries' and liaise with cluster groups to develop and deliver the intervention requested (S).*
> *More coordinators! Maybe one for each region in England (NW, NE, SW, SE?) (E).*
> *Have more than one Coordinator for England or provide her with extra support as in Admin support to reduce the pressure on her. Keep chairs*

> *updated with information, regional and national meeting as events through newsletters sent by email (E).*
> *More work needs to be put into developing the networking side of it and encouraging cluster groups to be more independent and proactive. At present all that seems to happen centrally is that there is one networking day a year and one chairs meeting a year. the cluster groups need to become more involved in how FEI develops but they need support to achieve this (E).*

There were also calls from all three countries for more opportunities to network with other cluster groups both locally and nationally:

> *Encourage more contact between local FEI Cluster Groups to see how they do things in their local group. Share ideas, resources, experiences and people (W).*
> *Have an FEI magazine/newsletter detailing what each cluster group is up to (W).*
> *More regional meetings that involve networking with other neighbouring clusters (S).*

Raising the profile of FEI was considered important and one Scottish respondent considered that this should be the responsibility of the executive, not the cluster groups:

> *FEI has to raise its profile within the education sector. It is still largely seen as peripheral rather than complimentary to mainstream education. It should not really be the role of cluster groups to promote FEI and fund raise in a general sense. FEI at a national level should be building a stronger partnership and encouraging national partners to work with cluster groups at the local level. Too many key partners or potential partners e.g. National Trust, woodland Trust, BTCV, Wildlife Trusts, etc. are membership organisations and are motivated to promote themselves rather than FEI… It may also be useful to have an annual campaign/activity that all cluster groups are delivering to keep promotion and awareness levels high. All the usual local stuff would carry on as usual but just like this is the year of biodiversity and next is the year of the Forest we could work to a different annual theme of some kind with partnership funding geared to support it (S).*

Whilst there were positive comments regarding the governance and structure of FEI:

> *Groups and individuals use it when they want/need it and flexible set up works well (E).*

Maintain current high standards of support from FC (S).

There were a number of issues highlighted, many of which were discussed earlier in this section (particularly in relation to needing more coordinator support and changes to funding):

Clear statement of the role and responsibilities of the FEI cluster group chair (E).
Fund raise for paid coordinators for each cluster working at least in a part time capacity. Provide a workshop/power point for chairs or other committee members on how to establish an FEI group (W).

4. Discussion and conclusions

This report outlines how the FEI has grown and developed over the past 19 years. It illustrates how it is funded and the types of activities and projects that are run by cluster groups across Britain. There are a lot of people and activities associated with FEI and this peaks and dips at different times based on the enthusiasm, willingness and ability to act of cluster group members, many of whom are volunteers. From the analysis of the data we suggest that there is a typology that can aid thinking about the types of support needed and required by different cluster groups (Box 3).

Box 3: Cluster group support typology[24]

Necessary support: group depends on support of coordinator/FCW Woodlands for Learning team member/development officer. The FEI representative actively holds the group together, provides cohesion through time and strongly supports any activities. Without this support the group would be unlikely to continue.

Regular support: group depends on support of coordinator/FCW Woodlands for Learning team member/development officer, however if support was removed the group would probably adapt with other members filling roles.

Occasional/on demand support: group makes use of occasional support and guidance from coordinator, advice required during funding applications etc., group strong enough to continue with such levels of support.

Limited support: these groups require very little support and are in essence autonomous; however they want to be within the FEI umbrella.

The SWOT analysis provides an opportunity to raise debate about the values and benefits of FEI and how it could or might be developed in the future. It seems clear that communication internally and externally could be improved and the new website should aid this. Communication should not just be one way from the bottom to the top or vice versus: it is multi-dimensional. Clearer communication of FEI might also help to increase its profile, making it clear which Forest Schools are FEI associated/run which are not, what projects are funded and organised by FEI members. It is not easy to get an accurate picture of all the FEI activities taking place as only funded projects are required to record information (and even this information is not always recorded or captured) that can then be used centrally to develop a country or GB level overview.

The factors that seem to make strong cluster groups include:

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[24] It is difficult to identify where current cluster groups sit within this typology, the groups themselves would need to identify this.

- Few demands on members (e.g. groups that operate mainly as email networks)
- Flexibility – accommodating sub groups with particular interests (e.g. Devon Northern Forest School group)
- High levels of FEI coordinator/FC support
- Enthusiastic core of members
- Definite and common purpose.

Bearing in mind the factors that make strong groups Box 4 suggests what the potential types of cluster groups might be.

Box 4: Cluster group types

- **Short term project focused groups** – minimally active groups that get together to apply for funding and disperse after funding and projects are finished, or disperse if no funding is gained.
- **Intermittent groups** – changing active members who work on specific projects, struggles to provide continuity.
- **Long term network focused groups** – small number of core longish term members, cohesive email network, strong interest in education and outdoors, some project work developed through FEI or through other routes.

FEI sits well with a range of policy agendas such as education, sustainable forest management, children and youth, training and skills development, volunteering, and with the emerging 'Big Society'[25] agenda.

It is clear from this review that the FEI is undertaking a wide range of activities and involves a diverse membership across GB. This review provides an opportunity for reflection of FEI; its aims and purpose and its future direction.

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[25] Cabinet Office (2010) 'Building the Big Society',
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf

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6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Example protocol for telephone interviews

Protocol for telephone interviews with <u>FEI steering committee members</u>

Introduction

Thank for agreeing to take part

Asked to do review of FEI by the countries, to investigate its activities, celebrate its successes and to look to the future.

Aim of the interview, topics to be covered.

Information on the review in general, what other types of information we are gathering, form whom and how. What we hope to do with the results of the interview.

Interview will last around one hour, remind that what is said will be confidential as far as possible.

Background

What do you know about why FEI was created and the drivers for its creation?
What do you know about how FEI has developed and evolved since it was created
- since it was devolved to country steering groups?
Why is your organisation involved in the FEI?

Aims of the FEI:

How do the aims fit with the objectives of [your organisation]?
        Are the aims of the FEI appropriate to [their organisation]?
        Is your organisation interested in some of the aims more than others?

Do you consider that the aims of the FEI are being met
- of [your organisations] involvement in the FEI are being met?

How appropriate is the FEI in meeting your expectations/educating children about the forestry industry and wood products or about the particular environment?

How do the aims of the FEI fit with the broader educational (outdoor, environmental, vocational etc) context of your organisations interests?

Does the FEI offer anything more (different approach, greater value…?) than other organisations/ [your own organisations] E&L activities?

Activities
How much involvement do you have in the activities of the FEI?

Are they appropriate activities?
  To meet the aims of the FEI?
  For the particular audience,
  To justify [your organisations] involvement?

Perceptions of Forest School:
  Should the FEI minimise its involvement in Forest School?
   If so what else should it focus on?
  Should the FEI continue to support its delivery?

Governance
Is the current governance structure appropriate for the most effective running of the FEI? (e.g. having Cluster Groups, having coordinators, having country steering group/national executive)

How might the governance of the FEI be improved?

Do you have good relations with the other organisations in FEI? (will be useful to get names of these)

Do you have a feel for why are certain organisations more or less active in the steering groups?

How much do your organisation feel that you can influence the direction of FEI?

Funding
What are your opinions on the relative importance of FEI funding (against support/guidance etc)?
  How important is providing funding for the cluster groups? (i.e. does it attract
  them to the FEI?)

Are the funding opportunities appropriate?
  For the cluster groups? Are they enough of an incentive for groups to apply?
  To meet the aims of the FEI?

Impacts

What are the specific impacts that [your organisation] hopes for through involvement in the FEI?

What impacts has involvement in the FEI had for [your organisation]?

What do you see as the impacts of [your organisations] involvement in the direction and activities of the FEI?

Overall what do you think the FEI has achieved? Since their involvement, since FEI was created? – key points

Do you gather any information or data on the impact of FEI for your organisation?

Future
What will be the role of the steering committee organisations in the future?

How do you see the FEI developing? Or how do you think it should develop?
　　　Meeting new aims
　　　Different audiences
　　　In wider education context (particularly in different countries)

Is [your organisations] future involvement in FEI assured?

Close the interview, thank you for taking part

Appendix 2. FEI review survey of cluster groups

Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

Hello and welcome to the FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences Survey.

There are 21 questions and it should take about 20-30 minutes to fill in. You can leave a partially completed survey and return to it at a later time (though only from the SAME computer). The survey will close on the 31st of March.

Please refer to the letter for guidance to completing the questions. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca.Lovell@forestry.gsi.gov.uk 01420 526 196 or Liz.Obrien@forestry.gsi.gov.uk 01420 526 155

Your responses will be kept confidential.

1. Which cluster group do you represent?

	England	Scotland	Wales
Cluster group	▾	▾	▾

Other (please specify)

2. Currently how many people...

Are registered as members of your cluster group?

Are active members of your cluster group?

Attend your cluster group meetings?

3. How often does your cluster group meet?

	Frequency
Frequency of meetings	▾

Approximately how long do your meetings last?

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

4. Approximately how many of your cluster group's members... (there may be some overlap in numbers)

	number
Are currently or have recently been employed as teachers?	
Have other formal education related employment (e.g. Active Schools Coordinators, LEA education staff, the education officers of charities)?	
Have outdoor education employment (voluntary or paid e.g. Field Studies Council educator or Scout Leaders)?	
Are currently delivering Forest School?	
Are countryside rangers, foresters, park wardens or have other countryside management employment?	
Are employed by the Forestry Commission?	
Are employed by or are members of other professional forestry regulatory or advisory bodies (e.g. ConFor, Timber Trade Federation or The Tree Council)?	
Are employed within the private commercial forestry sector?	
Are employed by an environmental, cultural or educational charity?	
Are employed by the Local Education Authority, County or City Council?	
Are employed by Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, a National Park or AONB Authority or similar?	
Are craftspeople, artists, authors or similar?	

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

5. Please indicate your cluster group's members' motivations for belonging to the FEI...

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important
Opportunities to network with other educators/organisations in region	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to network with other educators/organisations nationally	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to access funding for educational activities	○	○	○	○
Support for Forest School training	○	○	○	○
Support for other educational training	○	○	○	○
Support for Forest School delivery	○	○	○	○
Support for other educational delivery	○	○	○	○
Access to classroom materials and resources	○	○	○	○
To further knowledge/expertise in education regarding trees, forests and forest related products	○	○	○	○
Membership of a nationally recognised organisation	○	○	○	○

Please describe any other aims

6. Please describe your cluster group's FEI activities...

(e.g. planning and delivering FEI Partnership funded projects, delivery of other educational activities directly funded, supported or facilitated (e.g. through training) by the FEI, training, networking, Forest School accreditation, use of FEI classroom materials etc)

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

7. What percentage of your total cluster group activity is related to Forest School?

	Percentage of total time
To Forest School training?	▢ ▾
To Forest School delivery?	▢ ▾
To Forest School related networking?	▢ ▾
In total?	▢ ▾

Have you always had this level of focus on Forest School?

[text box]

8. Please indicate your reasons for using the following approaches (if applicable)...

	For educational outcomes	To improve environmental knowledge and behaviour	For psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes	Improve people's perceptions of learning and school	Increase knowledge of forestry and the associated industries and products	Not applicable (don't use this approach)
FEI outdoor educational activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forest School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other outdoor programme or activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visit to forestry related organisation or site	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of classroom based resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking/training events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

9. In total, approximately how many participants took part in your cluster group's FEI activities in each of the years below?

(please don't count repeated contact, e.g. if you have 10 participants attending Forest School for six weeks please only count 10 rather than 60 (10X6), and see Q6 and letter for description of 'FEI activities')

Year	
2009	
2008	
2007	
2006	
2005	
2004	
2003	
2002	
2001	
2000	

10. What were the ages of the participants who have taken part in your cluster group's FEI activities in the previous years?

	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	not applicable
2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2008	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2007	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2006	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2005	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2004	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2003	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2002	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2001	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2000	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. Do you record the outcomes/impacts of your cluster group's FEI activities?

○ Yes always or sometimes

○ No

If yes, please describe what you assess and how you record the outcomes/impacts

[text box]

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

12. Please indicate if you have observed any positive impacts from the following FEI activities (if applicable) you have undertaken...

	Educational outcomes	Environmental knowledge and behaviour outcomes	Psychological, emotional or behavioural outcomes	People's perceptions of learning and school	Knowledge of forestry and the associated industries and products	Not applicable (don't use this approach)
FEI outdoor educational activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forest School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other outdoor programme or activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visit to forestry related organisation or site	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of classroom based resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking/training events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. What impacts, if any, has the links between educators and forestry related industries or organisations had for your cluster group?

14. Do you think that the funding opportunities available to cluster groups are useful and accessible?

15. Has your cluster group ever applied for the £200 grant?

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, what do you use the money for? If no, why not?

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

16. Has your cluster group ever applied for FEI Partnership project funding (grants of between £200 and £5000)?

○ Yes

○ No

If no, why not? If yes, what are your opinions of the match funding requirements, did you find it easy or difficult?

17. How do you value...

	Very highly	Highly	Neutral	Not important
The expertise and support of the FEI coordinators?	○	○	○	○
The support of other members of your cluster group?	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for networking with other cluster groups?	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to learn from other cluster group's experiences?	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to attend the National Networking events?	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for contact with the forestry industry?	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to apply for funding?	○	○	○	○
The information and resources held on the FEI website?	○	○	○	○

Any other comments?

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Survey of FEI Cluster Group Activities and Experiences

18. How do you rate your cluster group's experience of the following...

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Not applicable
Contact with FEI coordinators?	○	○	○	○	○
Level of support from FEI coordinators?	○	○	○	○	○
Support and interaction with other cluster groups?	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for networking within the FEI?	○	○	○	○	○
Availability and access to resources?	○	○	○	○	○
Applying for Partnership Fund project funding (if applicable)?	○	○	○	○	○
Administration of the Partnership Fund project funding (if applicable)?	○	○	○	○	○
Use of FEI website?	○	○	○	○	○
The resources on the FEI website?	○	○	○	○	○

If you have any comments regarding any of the above please use the box below

19. Overall do you think belonging to the FEI network adds value to your educational activities, and, if so, what does it add?

20. Do you have any suggestions for how the FEI network could be improved in the future?

21. Your details...

Name:

Country:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

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Appendix 3: List of the cluster groups of England, Scotland and Wales identified in FEI annual review 2009

Country	Cluster Group	Country	Cluster Group	Country	Cluster Group
England	Birmingham	Scotland	Ayrshire	Wales	Aberystwyth (North and Mid Ceredigion)
England	Black Country	Scotland	Cowall, Bute & Helensburgh	Wales	Awyr Agored (Mid Powys)
England	Blackdown Hills	Scotland	Dumfries & Galloway	Wales	Blaenau Gwent
England	Bolton	Scotland	East Lothian	Wales	Bridgend
England	Bristol, Bath & West	Scotland	Edinburgh & Lothians	Wales	Caerphilly
England	Cheshire	Scotland	Fife	Wales	Camarthanshire
England	Cornwall	Scotland	Glasgow	Wales	Cardiff
England	Cotswolds	Scotland	Highland	Wales	Dyfi (South Gwynedd and North Powys)
England	Cumbria and North Lancs	Scotland	Lanarkshire	Wales	Egin Conwy
England	Devon	Scotland	Midlothian	Wales	Gwynedd
England	Essex	Scotland	Moray	Wales	Impio (Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham)
England	Forest Of Dean	Scotland	North & West Argyll	Wales	Merthyr Tydfil
England	Great Western Community Forest		North East	Wales	Monmouthshire
England	Herefordshire	Scotland	North Highland	Wales	Montgomeryshire (North Powys)
England	Kent	Scotland	Scottish Borders	Wales	Newport
England	Leeds	Scotland	Stirling	Wales	Neath Port Talbot
England	London: Epping Forest	Scotland	Tayside	Wales	Newport
England	London: South West	Scotland	West Lothian	Wales	Pembrokeshire
England	National Forest	Scotland	North East Fife	Wales	Rhondda Cynon Taff
England	Norfolk	Scotland	East and West Dumbartonshire	Wales	South Powys
England	North East			Wales	Torfaen
England	North West			Wales	Vale of Glamorgan
England	Northamptonshire			Wales	Ynys mon
England	Nottinghamshire & Leicestershire				
England	Oxfordshire				
England	Rochdale				
England	Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin				
England	South Manchester				
England	South Yorkshire				
England	Staffordshire				
England	Surrey and Sussex				
England	Tees Valley				
England	Worcestershire				
England	Yeovil & Dorset				

Appendix 4: FEI Corporate associate leaflet, 2005

Appendix 5: Details of the partnership funded project reports

Partnership funded project reports accessed by the authors

Country	Project start year	Total reports received
England	2004	6
	2005	3
	2006	3
	2007	2
	2008	2
England Total	**2004-2008**	**16**
Scotland	2004	2
	2005	5
	2006	2
	2007	4
	2008	3
Scotland Total	**2004-2008**	**16**
Wales	2003	1
	2004	3
	2005	11
	2006	8
	2007	5
	2008	2
	2009	4
Wales Total	**2003-2009**	**34**
GB Total	**2003-2009**	**66**

Appendix 6: Occupation and backgrounds of FEI members by country

Occupation and background	England	Percentage of total English membership	Scotland	Percentage of total Scottish membership	Wales	Percentage of total Welsh membership	Total	Percentage of total membership
Are currently or have recently been employed as teachers	282	32%	56	28%	149	44%	487	35%
Have other formal education related employment (e.g. Active Schools Coordinators, LEA education staff, the education officers of charities)	174	20%	40	20%	34	10%	248	18%
Have outdoor education employment (voluntary or paid e.g. Field Studies Council educator or Scout Leaders)	191	22%	34	17%	52	16%	277	20%
Are currently delivering Forest School	254	29%	26	13%	107	32%	387	28%
Are countryside rangers, foresters, park wardens or have other countryside management employment	100	12%	37	19%	20	6%	157	11%
Are employed by the Forestry Commission	25	3%	26	12%	19	6%	70	5%
Are employed by or are members of other professional forestry regulatory or advisory bodies (e.g. ConFor, Timber Trade Federation or The Tree Council)	10	1%	5	3%	4	1%	19	1%
Are employed within the private commercial forestry sector	21	3%	5	3%	10	3%	36	3%

Occupation and background	England	Percentage of total English membership	Scotland	Percentage of total Scottish membership	Wales	Percentage of total Welsh membership	Total	Percentage of total membership
Are employed by an environmental, cultural or educational charity	86	10%	22	11%	23	7%	131	9%
Are employed by the Local Education Authority, County or City Council	205	24%	55	28%	107	32%	367	26%
Are employed by Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, a National Park or AONB Authority or similar	16	2%	12	6%	5	1%	33	2%
Are craftspeople, artists, authors or similar	50	6%	18	9%	23	7%	91	6%

Appendix 7: Motivations for membership of FEI
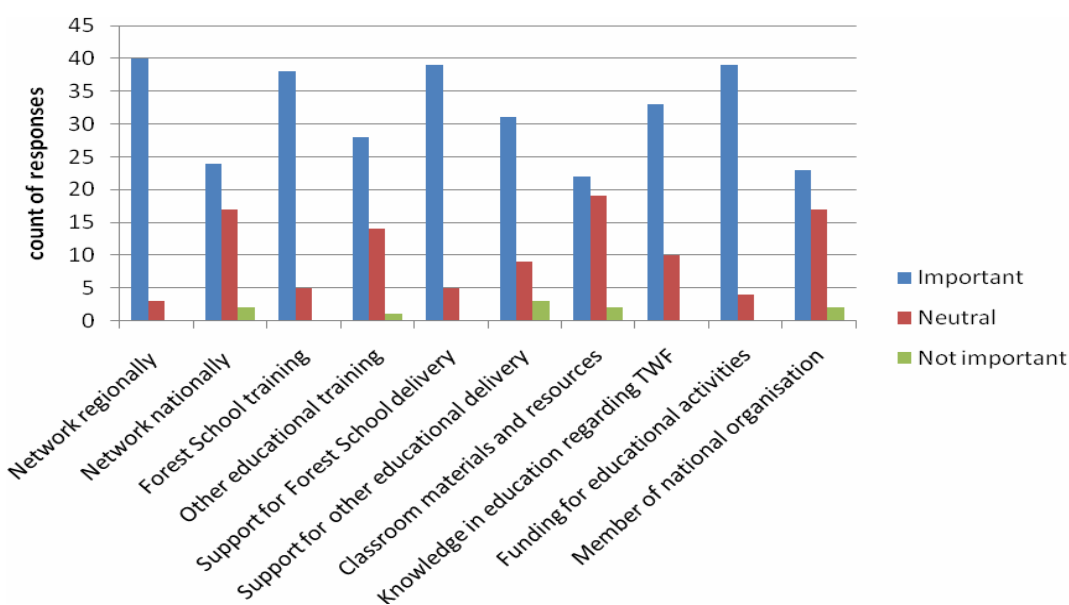
Appendix 8: Partnership fund project activity types

Activity type	England	Scotland	Wales	GB
Forest School	6	4	10	20
Timber / forestry sector	5	5	10	20
Environmental improvement	1	1	14	16
Training	4	8	3	15
Biodiversity/ environmental	5	2	6	13
Music / arts etc	0	2	6	8
Resources (learning, teaching)	1	2	2	5
Forest play schemes	0	0	3	3
Research / evaluation	1	0	1	2