

# Characterising Community Woodlands in England and Exploring Support Needs

Phil Tidey  
Policy and Technical Manager

Angela Pollard  
Woodland Initiatives Network Co-ordinator

Small Woods

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This study was commissioned by Forest Research as part of a wider programme looking at community engagement with woodlands. Small Woods is solely responsible for the content of this report and its interpretation.

## Executive summary

1. For the purposes of this research we define a community woodland group as ‘a community-led group which takes an active role in the management of a woodland which it might own or lease, or work in with the owner’s permission’.
2. Through contact with relevant organisations, existing databases and public bodies we have identified 317 community woodland groups in England which meet our definition.
3. Clusters of groups were identified in the North West, South East and South West, and group members were invited to attend focus groups in each location, to discuss their objectives, support needs and barriers.
4. Group objectives broadly fell into four categories - biodiversity, education and awareness raising, amenity and recreation, woodland produce. All groups mentioned the first three (although priorities varied), while fewer groups produced timber or other items.
5. Support needs varied markedly from group to group depending on the level of ‘ownership’ the group has of their woodland. Many groups have professionals involved as part of their group. Support from other organisations is patchy, but woodland initiatives, where present, provided good support.
6. Groups identified a narrow and aging volunteer base as a major problem for the future, threatening sustainability. This was blamed on a lack of understanding in the local community, a disconnect between people and woodlands and lack of free time for younger adults.
7. Groups tend to be isolated and have little contact with others. As a result there is little exchange of experience and learning.
8. There is confidence that groups are sustainable financially in terms of their baseline activities but lack of funds is preventing new initiatives as groups do not have the skills of experience to easily access larger grants.
9. We conclude with recommendations for future support, which focus on facilitating groups in learning from each other and setting up joint support structures.

## **1. Introduction**

This study was commissioned by Forest Research. In 2009 the present authors carried out a study ‘Community Woodlands in England - Baseline Report’ (Pollard and Tidey 2009) which researched a representative sample of community woodland groups (CWG) as a basis of future research on development support. The present study focuses on a number of groups across the country and looks in more detail at management objectives, training needs, advice and support and barriers.

The background to this baseline study is explained in “What Does Community Forestry Mean in a Devolved Great Britain?” (Lawrence *et al.* 2009), which focused on the development of community forestry in Great Britain over the last 20 years, and identified the need for further research on community groups.

Since devolution in 1998 national agendas in Scotland and Wales have become more prominent, and formerly UK wide organisations have had to modify their structures to be able to respond more flexibly to community aspirations. Changes in land tenure and a different political context resulted in the formation in 2003 of the Community Woodland Association in Scotland, which is driving forward rural development objectives where community ownership of woodlands can provide jobs and income to rural areas. In Wales there is less emphasis on rural development but similar drivers have seen the formation in 2009 of Llais y Coedwig (Voice of the Woodlands) to represent community woodland groups (CWGs) in Wales. In England there is no single community woodland organisation. Community woodland groups look to one or more organisations to provide them with support and information.

### **1.1 Community woodland groups in Wales and Scotland**

In Wales the Cydcoed programme was a major initiative to support community woodlands, launched by Forestry Commission Wales and Tir Coed in 2001. Funding of £16 million from the European Union Objective 1 programme supported the initiative in two phases between 2001 and 2008, and 163 community groups benefited (Wilmot and Harris, 2009). Coed Lleol, a Small Woods Association project began in 2003 and helped local people to reconnect to the woodlands, working with the CWGs in Wales to run events and find opportunities to engage with the communities around them, this project was also funded through Objective 1. Then in February 2009 Llais Y Goedwig was launched to support and represent community led woodland groups in Wales, helped and facilitated by Coed Lleol. Coed Lleol withdrew from that initial facilitation in September 2010.

The community woodland movement in Scotland has been identified as being driven by passion and politics (Calvert 2009), with the land reform movement pushing and supporting community-centric land ownership and management. Reforesting Scotland (RS) played an important role, lobbying for recognition and support of community

woodlands, and providing the groups with information and networking opportunities. A key moment occurred when the Forestry Commission in Scotland was asked by the Secretary of State to work in partnership with the Laggan Community to devise a scheme to establish Community Forestry for mutual benefit. The relationship between the Forestry Commission and the Laggan Forest Trust was formalised in September 1998. Since then the numbers of community woodland groups have grown to about 200. The Community Woodlands Association was created in Scotland in 2003.

## **1.2 The community woodland context in England**

There is a significant difference between the support and development of community woodlands groups in England, compared to Scotland and Wales. The situation in England is much more fragmented and there is no “one-stop” organisation as has emerged in Wales and Scotland (Tidey & Pollard 2009). There is some support but it is often dependent on how a community woodland group was initiated, so if a local authority or the Woodland Trust facilitated group initiation, for instance, they will maintain links and provide information and support.

One support organisation known to many community woodland groups is the BTCV, formerly known as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. BTCV is UK wide and has been running for more than fifty years. One of its principle aims is to increase the number of people and communities that have the capacity and ability to change their environment. Membership of the BTCV Community Network is open to all conservation groups, including woodland groups. It produces a newsletter every quarter and offers information, guidance and support to community groups. There are no networking meetings but groups have access to local officers around the country, and importantly 80% of the groups join to gain access to the insurance services provided.

The Woodland Trust established a Community Woodland Network (Your Woods) in 2003 and held conferences in 2003, 2005 and 2007. Your Woods was launched UK-wide and was specifically for community woodland groups, to provide them with a networking opportunity and information. There was no cost to join. Membership was open to all community woodland groups, not just those managing Woodland Trust land. Small grants were available under Your Woods; these are no longer available although there are opportunities for help under other Woodland Trust schemes. Unlike the community woodland organisations in Scotland and Wales, Your Woods is managed and operated by the Woodland Trust an independent charity rather than community woodland groups themselves. The initial reaction to Your Woods was positive and community woodland groups were keen to join the network; over 200 groups joined at the beginning. There was a hope within the Woodland Trust that community woodlands in England would be inspired to work together, to take Your Woods forward and form their own association. This has not happened. The number of Woodland Trust staff involved in Your Woods has now dropped and the number of

community woodland groups registered on the site has also dropped. Members on the website are predominantly England based, with two listed in Wales and none in Scotland. The information provided and the grants package for community woodland groups has been well received and is seen as “very good”. The Woodland Trust has plans to create a simple blog area on the website in the future, and a volunteering conference is planned.

The Urban Parks Forum formed in 1999 as a voluntary organisation created through Heritage Lottery funding for historic urban parks. In 2003 the Forum changed its name to GreenSpace and two years later became a charity. They have formed a national on-line support network for community groups working in parks and green spaces. GreenSpace also published The Community Networking Report 2003 which found that 4000 green space community groups, comprising half a million individual members, undertake eight million volunteer hours a year. The report calculates the economic value of the work of community groups in parks and green space across the UK to be £35 million (<http://www.green-space.org.uk>).

In March 2008 GreenSpace facilitated a meeting between Friends’ group forums at which it was decided to form the National Open Spaces Forum (NOSF); a constitution was drawn up and a Steering Group elected in February 2010. NOSF will be a UK network of forums which promote, protect and improve the UK’s parks and green spaces by linking all the friends and user forums and networks throughout the country.

GreenSpace membership is very much linked to Local Authority parks and green spaces, and therefore would not necessarily be identified with CWGs, particularly in urban fringe and rural areas, but the links should be noted and some CWGs work within parkland with rangers. GreenSpace provide a number of resources including case studies, and have a funding section on their website particularly for community groups. One of the Liverpool groups within the focus groups for this report is linked to the Liverpool Parks Friends Forum (LPFF), which was set up in 2006 by 33 Liverpool Parks Friends groups in collaboration with Liverpool City Council. LPFF aims to raise the profile of these community led groups, empower them to raise funding and be involved in Council policy decisions. LPFF has links to NOSF.

Woodland Initiatives in England are a diverse group of not-for-profit organisations, some have charitable status and a few work within local authorities or AONBs (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Woodland management is at the heart of their objectives but they can work across a number of different specialist projects within their regions, such as business advice, woodfuel production and vocational training. This project work relates to funding that is available. Many initiatives provide local woodland management information and advice to CWGs and woodland owners, but few initiatives have the resources for a dedicated person to visit numerous woodlands and support community woodland groups on a regular basis. Oxfordshire Woodland Project, one of the initiatives, was highlighted during the course of this research in the South East focus group, as a good source of support and information.

England's Community Forests were established in 1990 to demonstrate the potential contribution of environmental improvement to economic and social regeneration in urban areas. From some pilot areas the programme expanded and twenty years on they are still demonstrating that community engagement and ongoing support of community groups is an essential driver for the management of woodland and community green spaces. Mersey Forest, for instance, established the Community Contracting Initiative and has supported some of the North West's community woodland groups within our research.

## **2. The Aims of the Study**

The aim of this study is to extend our previous work (Pollard and Tidey, 2009) and to examine the operational dynamics and support needs of community woodland groups in England. The terms of reference for this study are given in Appendix 6.

Specifically, objectives of the study are to:

1. Build on our existing database to more accurately quantify the size and location of the community woodland sector through contacts with organisations, woodland initiatives, Forestry Commission, local authorities and others.
2. Hold three regional focus groups in the North West, South East and South West with community woodland group members to examine objectives, barriers, aspirations and support needs.
3. Document the consultation process and report on the support needs of the community woodland sector.
4. Synthesise the research material to characterise the types of community woodland groups represented and the opportunities for developing support mechanisms for those groups which may or may not include the Forestry Commission

### **2.1 Definitions**

What is a community woodland group? Volunteers are involved in woodlands in a variety of ways from volunteer working groups directed by a professional usually from the site owner, to a constituted group which owns the freehold of a woodland, and manages it for multiple objectives.

For our purposes in this study a community woodland group is defined as:

*'a community-led group which takes an active role in the management of a woodland which it might own or lease, or work in with the owner's permission'.*

This definition might include a 'Friends of' group which agrees an annual work programme with Forestry Commission or the Woodland Trust, but exclude a regular



volunteer group organised and supervised by a ranger who sets tasks for each session.

We are particularly interested in those groups that have taken a degree of ownership of their local woodlands, and are involved to at least some degree in decision making around management, work plans, task prioritisation and objective setting.

Categorisation of group types is explored further in Section 5.11.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Scoping and database building

Little data has been available about the size of the community woodland sector in England. As part of our previous study we collated information from a variety of existing sources to assemble a database of 170 groups from across the country (Pollard and Tidey 2009). We were aware that this was only a partly complete list and as a first step in the present study we wanted to expand this.

Organisation	Information requested/provided
Woodland Trust Community Woodland Network	Information publicly available on Network website. Staff contacted for any groups not yet on the site.
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Community Network	Coordinator published request for participants in their regular letter
Forestry Commission	Request for information sent to all regional offices
Wildlife Trusts	Information request sent to all Trusts in England
Big Lottery Community Spaces grant recipients	Request for participants sent to all groups via grants team.
Woodland Initiatives	Request for information sent to all registered on the Woodland Initiatives Network
Community Forests	Request for information sent to all Community Forests
Small Woods members database	Requests for information sent to all groups
Local authorities	Requests for information sent to a variety of departments including tree/woodland officers, environment and planning departments
AONBs	Requests for information sent to all
National parks	Requests for information sent to all

**Table 1. Sources of information on CWGs**

Table 1 lists the organisations and groups that were sent an email (see Appendix 4) which requested the names of groups, the location and contact details for any community woodland groups they were aware of in their areas of operation and which met our definition of a community woodland group for inclusion in this study.


### 3.2 Cluster identification and participant selection


The second objective for this study is to explore community groups' aspirations, objectives and support needs representative of different English regions. Our approach to this involved convening a discussion group in each of three regions the South East, North West and South West. These three areas differ socially and economically, and in terms of landscape and predominant woodland type so providing different perspectives. Within each region manual mapping of the location data provided by the organisations emailed was used for cluster analysis which identified areas where numbers of CWGs were located reasonably closely to each other (Fig 1). These were the clusters from which the research participants were drawn.

A convenient centre, accessible by public transport, was then identified within each cluster as the venue for a group discussion. The principal contact for each woodland group within the cluster was then contacted by telephone and invited to attend. Weekend afternoons were selected in all cases as these were most acceptable to participants. In many cases the main contact agreed to attend, but in some they took the request to their next group meeting to decide on an attendee. Up to ten groups were invited in each regional cluster, but the final sample was self selected.





Fig.1 Location of community woodland group clusters and the focus group discussions

Location map - North West focus group (Delamere Forest) 


Community Woodland Group locations 




Location map - South East focus group (Didcot) 

Community Woodland Group locations 



Location map - South East focus group (Tiverton) 

Community Woodland Group locations 

### **3.3 Baseline participant group data**

Prior to attendance at the group discussion days each group attending was asked to complete a questionnaire giving information about their group and their woodland. This included their constitution, functioning, funding sources, group objectives, size and nature of woodland. This information is given in Appendix 2.

### **3.4 Approach and design of the discussion groups**

To facilitate discussion we decided to keep attendance at each discussion group to a maximum of ten people. The participants were divided into two sub-groups, which went on to consider the key research questions. In some cases more than one representative from a single woodland group attended the discussion, in which case they were allocated to different sub-groups.

The programme for the discussion groups is given in Appendix 3. Each event began with lunch which proved to be a good way of relaxing attendees, facilitating networking and introducing ourselves. Following this, in order to 'set the scene' and to trigger some general discussion there was a presentation introducing England's woodlands, their role, management and value. After a brief introduction to Forest Research and its role in the study, the five key group discussion questions were considered by the sub-groups. The questions covered group objectives and modes of operation, sources of support and an exploration of information and other community group needs. This was followed by feedback and discussion with the wider group. Each sub-group was facilitated by one of the authors, and the discussions recorded digitally for later transcription. The sound recordings were transcribed using F4 (<http://www.audiotranskription.de/english/downloads-en.html>), and the flip chart notes produced by the groups were also typed up.

Discussions were then analysed on a question by question basis but attention was also paid to cross cutting issues, and geographic differences were considered. The questions used to stimulate discussion are given in Appendix 3 and Appendix 6.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Database expansion**

Data protection considerations meant that in some cases organisations were unwilling to send group contact details to us directly, and instead they forwarded the study details on to CWGs and requested that they contact us themselves. Frequently, however, these details were available through the internet. Responses from local offices of national organisations, and from some local organisations was uneven, and regrettably we were unable to follow up email contact by telephone due to lack of time.

A database of 317 groups has now been created as a result of this and the earlier study (Pollard and Tidey 2009). Group names and the region where they are located are listed in Appendix 8.

## **4.2 Overview of discussion and results presentation**

In the following section, we illustrate our analysis with direct quotes. Those from participants are given in italics, and any comments from the facilitators are in non-italics.

In order to preserve the confidentiality of the discussants we have not assigned particular comments to individual attendees, neither in most cases have we indicated the region of the discussion groups. The broad range of interests, objectives and experience of CWG representatives attending the discussion groups presented so much diversity that it was not possible to identify regional patterns and draw general conclusions about group objectives and support needs in the different regions. The sample size limited analysis of genuine regional differences.

The three discussion group transcripts for each question/topic were scrutinised and subject to content analysis from which common themes were identified, with the relevant attendee comments aggregated and used to illustrate the themes. The boxes in the text below contain pertinent illustrative quotes on a particular theme from different subgroups/regions. In most cases the comments from attendees are individual quotes that occurred in discussions around that particular question; in some cases, however, longer exchanges occurred between attendees and these are clearly indicated by labelling the linked comments as coming from speaker 1 and speaker 2.

The following sections of the text report on the different sections of the group discussion and discuss the reactions and opinions generated as follows:

1. Introduction – purpose and use of woodlands
2. Woodland group objectives
3. Support and support needs
4. Training received and given
5. An exploration of what the CWG would do with a £10,000 windfall

## **4.3 Introductory presentation: Purpose and use of woodlands**

The only group discussion where a significant amount of discussion was triggered by the initial presentation was at Didcot. This was more likely to be an outcome of the particular mix of individuals present, an enthusiasm to participate and a need for information rather than reflecting the particular concerns of the region.

## Key Points

The discussion showed in broad terms the need for greater awareness amongst CWGs of the full range of management options and economic outputs that community woodlands can produce. It also highlighted the need for education of local communities who do not always understand woodland management systems and how integral they are to woodland sustainability. For example, mention of coppice products stimulated a long exchange based primarily around one group's experience of producing and marketing beanpoles. Other CWG members were very interested in learning from them; this was an excellent example of groups learning from each other and expanding their knowledge of the economic potential of their woodlands.

*(Beanpole production)*

*We can't make enough. Speaker 1*

*And you sell them? Speaker 2*

*Yeh. Speaker 1*

*Where do you sell them. Speaker 2*

*Just locally. Speaker 1*

*Directly to the buyers? Speaker 2*

*Does that encourage them to come and help themselves to it? Speaker 2*

*We've only, to my knowledge, only ever had one lot stolen. Speaker 1*

*And I'm thinking actually a lot of people stake their plants with them, if we promote it right. So we could sell them as 3fts and 4fts and what have you, possibly.*

*Because we could use more wood. Speaker 2*

*We sell as much as we can cope with. Speaker 1*

*What do you sell them for? Speaker 2*

*£3.10. Speaker 1*

This discussion was stimulated by mention of producing woodchip for fuel from woodlands. One CWG had approached a company with a view to selling small diameter material from thinning for woodchip, and the key statement here was the implication that another group was reluctant to approach professionals because of a lack of knowledge/technical jargon.

*(Brash for woodchip)*

*They'll want huge quantities I'm thinking. Speaker 1*

*But if you have a small woodland that you are managing this year. They'll take what you've got this year....they may not take it every year, but if you've got a big lot they may take it. It's worth talking to them and finding out what they want. They were set up to help people like you to deal with. Speaker 2*

*They will start talking tongues and I won't understand. Speaker 1*

*But if there is a few woodlands together you might be able to do something together. Speaker 2*



Information exchange, case studies and simple passing on of good ideas is rarely happening at present – our previous study (Pollard and Tidey 2009) found that most groups have no contact with others.

(Woodland produce)

- *I have often looked for products and keep hoping someone will come up with good ideas for other things that we can produce out of woodland, but it doesn't seem to be easy to come up with new ideas.*

Lack of understanding leading to local opposition was a common theme. The groups were frustrated because they were doing what they perceive as 'the right thing' by their woodlands but receiving criticism from local people. The groups said they do attempt to explain what they are doing by various means but this only seems to have limited success. Messages that local people absorb from non-local sources conceivably have more impact than local awareness-raising, now that managed woodlands are outside most people's experience.

(Opposition to management)

- *You haven't helped our predicament because the minute we try to do any tree felling or clearance, the local residents are up in arms, they go to the local councillor and she puts the kybosh on it.*
- Have you tried trying to interpret what you are doing to the local community having an educational day to explain what you're doing....put some signs up. (Presenter)
- *We do. We still get complaints about it and councillors are quite vociferous.*
- *Everybody stops and talks to us saying you're doing a good job. We seem to miss the people who run to the councillors.*

A number of CWGs work in woodlands owned by local authorities. Instances of lack of mutual understanding were discussed which have clearly had an impact on the relationships and were a cause of frustration for the groups. Safety considerations are at the core of some of these, and local authorities clearly have a responsibility in this area but in some cases they are not consulting with groups and taking them with them when decisions are made. There clearly is a feeling that local authorities are keen to work with groups but not in genuine partnerships.

(Working together)

- *If I need to do something I look at what other people have done.*
- *And the one thing that amazes me is that we're all sitting around here fighting our own little battles and it's a bit like amateur football having different leagues but the Football Association is a highly organised set up and everybody plays in it and that's in a sense what we ought to be trying to do with environmental groups.*

Members of the discussion groups talked about feeling isolated and out of contact with similar local groups, and not in touch with good ideas and good practice across the country.

#### 4.4 Woodland group objectives

- *Biodiversity, habitat, ecological is one area, there's the community side of it - the social aspect, access, amenity, community benefit. Then there's the carbon aspect, and renewable fuel source.*

The objectives identified broadly fall into four categories as: conservation/biodiversity; public access/amenity; woodland produce/restoration of traditional management; or education/community awareness raising. The CWGs recognised that these four areas varied in priority from group to group and that there was overlap between these priorities – for example biodiversity enhancement activities have an educational value, and restoration of coppice management can have benefits for biodiversity.

Participants were aware of the value of woodlands as a carbon sink, and as a source of carbon-neutral woodfuel.

- *It does depend on social factors, what's fashionable. So when woodlands were planted in 70s and 80s it was for amenity and habitat or biodiversity. Woods had been lost hand over fist all over the country so people started to plant trees to replace those because they wanted to improve habitat for wildlife and for amenity. But now things have changed there's a need for a renewable fuel source and there's a need for providing carbon sink, or reducing the impacts of climate change by absorbing CO2.*

Some participants spoke of their desire to 'protect and restore' their woodland, to act as guardians on behalf of their community and in some cases were frustrated by the inability of local people to understand their role and value.



What do you mean by protect and restore? (facilitator)

- *To make sure it is available for the use of local people. In our instance they use it for dog walking, the children play there, they use it for walking themselves. There is a limited amount of using of fuel. When we chop things down, if it can be picked up it's not there for very long, it goes if it can be carried out. It's somewhere that people like to look at and we're concerned that it's always there for the people to use. ... The objective you are trying to reach is to protect it for the community, wildlife, mammals, biodiversity*
- *It started off historical but what we look at now is what use is the woodland to the community and how it fits together and the idea is it's a resource for recreation, wildlife, mammals and it's also for dog walkers, it's a whole package together. There are areas set aside for biodiversity, for insects, for birds, for mammals and we encourage those particular areas.*

Groups in each location varied as to their social and geographical setting and at the outset participants were unsure of whether there were common issues and problems that would affect both a rural woodland and one located in a city, but, over the events much common ground was found and participants, many functioning in isolation, enjoyed the opportunity to exchange experiences.

- *I started my thinking in many senses we are quite different because we are a rural area but the basic motive that we've all got is the desire to preserve and enhance a local amenity which I guess in all cases was neglected and endangered. And really want to keep it for the same sort of thing, conservation, cultural history, regenerating it for the future. All objectives that we share*
- *....everyone has got similar ideas it's just that some people see certain things as being more important as others.*

#### **4.4.1 Conservation/biodiversity**

Conservation/biodiversity enhancement came very high in their list of objectives for most of the CWGs represented at the discussion groups. The terms meant different things to different people, however. To some conservation essentially meant non-intervention whereas with others there was no incompatibility between active economic management and biodiversity enhancement. For some groups the objectives were group-defined and led, and with others they were working with specialist organisations such as Landlife, the local badger group or RSPB.

- *Biodiversity is the bedrock, you get that right you can do all the other fancy stuff.*
- *We have this area which is our wildlife area, minimum interaction zones, we don't even walk in there just let it do its own thing.*
- *We put in 2000 trees and they are in wood form to half standard and we've put in 8 million wildflower seeds. What that's doing is turning the whole package around. The central woodland was used as a tip by the city council that was dug out and we started again surrounded by mature tree, that's been turned around in 7 years.*
- *Top one for me biodiversity I'm not going to get commercial wood out of it I want to achieve the maximum diversity for the type of woodland that seems natural for that area.*

#### **4.4.2 Public access/amenity**

Almost all groups see as a core part of their role preserving and developing public access and developing their site as a community asset. Where groups are working on sites in partnership with the site owner such as a wildlife trust or local council this is clear cut, but where groups own their site they also consider that encouraging public access is a major objective.

- *If it wasn't open for the public you would have more difficulty getting funding and get support.*
- *It's owned by the Parish Council now and has public access and anybody could use it for any reasonable purpose at any time, enabled us to get a lot of support and grants.*
- *So it was very much a community resource an amenity for social, psychological, dog walking. It also happens to screen the town from the new industrial estate and the north Devon link road.*
- *And we've got maybe an acre of coppice area, lots of hazel in it and it's a relatively flat area and we put in all weather paths, especially wide enough for wheelchair access and we got funding for that.*

#### **4.4.3 Woodland produce/restoration of traditional management**

With this objective there was far more variation in where it appeared in the lists of priorities. Few groups (notably two in the South West) had woodland produce as a major objective. A larger number produced small amounts of produce (most commonly logs or beanpoles) as a by-product of their conservation management, and

a significant number had a policy of not felling trees or not removing wood from their woodland. One group has a policy of not using herbicide, and another only uses hand tools within their woodland.

..... from what I understand some of you are actually producing small amounts of logs and things like that but very much as a by-product of the other management.  
(facilitator)

- *We wouldn't because our policy is basically all timber produced in the wood would be left to rot down.*
- *We don't deliberately fell the trees.*
- *We used to have that, because you have conflicts from our members saying you must leave all the wood. But then we brought it up that there was so much wood they are aware that we had to sell. But we don't deliberately chop anything down*

The following comments are indicative of the kind of management systems being put into place and the growing level of concern over the economic and financial sustainability of CWGs. As a result of the pessimistic view of future funding prospects more of the groups are looking at the income potential of their woodland, and where groups are already generating income they are aware that there is the potential to make their sites sustainable and not dependent on public funding.

- *Although we didn't plant it to coppice it, there's hazel and there's ash that can be coppiced so thinnings and natural loss will be used for renewable fuel.*
- *We link the land and what it produces to finding local markets and local uses for it and economic uses, so it generates some money which goes back into the woodland. We charge people proportionately, somebody within 5 miles any woodfuel is free, 5-10 miles it might be £5, between 10-20 its £10 and 20 miles its £20. Basically the further you are away from the source of the wood and the more you pay for delivery.*
- *I can't emphasise how important it is to fell trees because the new growth from coppicing soaks up a load of carbon and if you leave those trees like they have been left since the 2nd World War in our woodland, they collapse and they split the rootball and that's the end of a 500 year old rootball.*

Con't

- *Making some money but also may be part of inclusivity and awareness depending on how you use your products.*
- *You try to make a bit of an income from your firewood and timber do you? We don't sell it outside at the moment. I'm trying to base my financial situation from earning money from the woods but we're trying to steer well clear of turning into a commercial operation, don't want that, keeping it as small scale as possible whilst still sustaining ourselves. We are still a not for profit company ... timber products are sold from the woodland.*
- *I'm thinking in terms of how the government will look at things potentially community woodlands is a bottomless financial pit, but if every little group is doing certain things to make themselves financially sustainable.*
- *Restoration of the former coppicing cycle.*
- *My restoration is about trying to restore the woods that have been greatly neglected over the last 50 odd years. We have ancient woodland we have plantation woodland. It's invaded with sycamores, brambles, we've got other nice things going there so we want to put it back to a working woodland again.*
- *-Possibly one of the ways for ours, for it to be almost self financing in that the produce we get we use to buy the equipment to carry on with the further restoration of the project. We are able to sell these beanpoles and peasticks.*
- *We do a lot of coppicing we provide stakes and binders for hedgelaying and we do quite well with that. We also are due to start getting rid of the beansticks and we are trying to push that. The local horticultural society are the ones that say bamboo is so much cheaper, we can't possibly sell yours.*
- *Our open day - we managed to fell some sycamore trees, we had a horse was going to pull the timber out. We had a mobile sawmill on site and he was slicing it up into planks and people were buying these planks but that's a huge expense to put on.*

#### **4.4.4 Education/community awareness raising**

*.....it's all about getting the focus in the woods and getting them to understand.*

Virtually all the groups were using their woodlands as an educational resource. In their understanding education could mean anything from formal forest school, to social forestry, visits by youth groups, accredited training for adults to informal awareness

raising activities. There was a great deal of concern about how society has lost its connection with woodlands, and they see that they have a role in trying to reverse this.

- *'Woodlands' a buzz phrase which somebody coined, it always used to have another purpose. People used to graze the cattle, people used to go in for products, it's not this isolated, fragmented, bubble it was much more part of everyday life (speaker is referring here to woodlands losing their link to everyday life, and becoming seen as in need of 'care and preservation')*
- *And they are acquiring skills they can use elsewhere. Marketable skills - portable skills so if you learn how to do pole-lathe work or coppicing or charcoal burning, people can either come to you and learn their skills, or people who have learnt them with you can go onto their own communities and pass on their skills.*
- *One of our objectives of our group is education. It frightens me to death the level of disconnection between people and nature.*

- *When we first started taking the infants school up (into the woodland), we were shocked and appalled because we are a rural market town but 90% of the kids coming into school did not possess a pair of wellingtons to go up to woodland. The school had to provide wellingtons to go up to the woodlands.*

The groups are involved in a range of educational activities. They are keen to do more but are lacking in support and training as the following quotes illustrate.

- *If only we could get children on our side. We have an infant's school in the village and encourage them to come in with their teachers. To give them some idea of what is there and what can be done.*
- *It is the resources on that. It's one thing I've tried to major on. The problem for me I'm not an educationalist. I need somehow to be able to run courses on our site. We've got a lot of grassland and woodland, hopefully as it improves there is a lot of opportunities but I can't manage that, I need some kind of agency that would be able to run clubs.*
- *We have bat evenings, dawn chorus walks, fungus foray, insect walks. We have something at least three events going on each year. But we don't get new people coming.*

- *People from the local community can maybe come and camp there for the night. We have kids groups from local schools and they come and have night time badger watching and a fire in the woods.*
- *We did have an outdoor classroom for the infants school, unfortunately it was trashed by the teenagers, who were using the woodland as their den area and resented the youngsters being in there, which is very sad. And we've got the scouts in there, probation, community service, adult learning difficulty group, they come up. All sorts of people use it.*
- *One of the things we are doing is establishing an outdoor classroom, we're quite close to the local school and we've made the head of the school a trustee. They walk through the woodland, they've incorporated the woodland in various aspects of national curriculum studies. Art, poetry as well.*
- *It all comes under the heading of education almost. At one end you've got the awareness but on the other end you've got accredited training programmes that you are offering. There's a broad range of stuff, there's the social forestry side, the probationers coming into the woodland and the forest schools which is a bit more organised.*
- *... a lot of the income from the woodland is actually from teaching because some members have got teaching qualifications and they do Forest School and survival.*
- *As we are on the front line of that. A huge pressure of people using the land and all their different ideas as to how it should be used. Whether it should be football, whether we need a baseball court there, whether we have a climbing frame there and a children's play area there, whether we have a skateboard park in that area, whether we have a bike ride park in that area. We are preserving the woodland for wildlife and for people. They don't see the idea of a wood, as a wood.*

#### **4.4.5 Setting objectives – the management plan**

The vast majority of the groups have a management plan which they are following. Where they differ is the role that the groups have had in their preparation, and the ownership they then have of the document and its delivery. At one extreme (see Section 3.1) groups deliver aspects of the management plan guided by a ranger or similar, which has been written by the site owner with some input from the group. At the other extreme the group has written the management plan, and has complete responsibility for its delivery. Where a group sits on this continuum depends on a number of factors such as ownership of the woodland, skills and experience of group members, longevity of the group, trust/credibility in the eyes of the site owners and objectives.

- *We went to a meeting with the council manager of the local parks and he was talking about what the council actually do for [...] woods. It was garbage he wasn't dealing with the dumping, all he said there was no funding, if you didn't like it write a management plan. So we said we'd write a management plan. We wrote a management plan based on (a woodland in Knowsley). They said we like that we'll accept it. It was moving things away from the woodland and the park as a liability; they didn't think a liability could be an asset.*
- *We have a management plan which has been lodged with the local authority and they approved that. It's for biodiversity, it's for social, there's local schools - education.*

So when you decided to set up was it a consensus with your group? (facilitator)

- *I proposed and it got modified and we ended up with a set of objectives one of which was certainly to do with biodiversity aims, restoration of grassland, wildflower grassland, education (a big issue for me). We had about 4 or 5.*
- *Ours came originally because the group was initiated when the local council were going to run a pilot scheme on 4 coppices in the borough, two of which were in the village to see if they could get any interest in community involvement in managing them. So they ran a series of meetings around the borough with representatives of the Wildlife Trust, to present in our case the sort of management plan that they had already conceived of, so we had a pre-conceived idea of what our objectives were. We eventually wrote them down as part of our constitution.*
- *I'm involved in them, I've got a management plan it's been evolving over the 3 years, it's still evolving. I'm getting more comfortable with what I want to define. I spend so many hours up there just observing and where we do make a change trying to work out what the impact of that change is going to be.*
- *You're writing the management plan, in other cases it might be the local authority writes the management plan and the group delivers part of that.*
- *We tend to carry them out but they are the ones that draw up the major part of it in consultation with senior members of the group.*

## 4.5 Support sources and needs

This part of the group discussion was designed to look at CWG members' knowledge of potential support sources, but the scope was widened to include existing sources of support for the groups in five areas – financial/fundraising, woodland management, health and safety, community engagement and conflicts.

### 4.5.1 Finance

For financial advice most of the groups could call upon the skills of group members who included solicitors, accountants and other suitably qualified professional.

### Sources of funding

All groups raise a proportion of their funds through self generation, which can include fundraising events, membership charges and produce sales. Membership income was not discussed here; this can vary enormously and was looked at in our earlier report (Pollard and Tidey 2009).

- *£5,800 is our basic income coming in.*
- *Your basic income - that's enough to keep you turning over. So that's 100% non public*
- *Table sales - £4000/year*
- *And our own fundraising - sell beanpoles, do teas and coffees for various events.*

There was some concern about the potential impact that public funding cutbacks might have on group funding.

- *This is what worries me in the future grants aren't going to be quite what they are now. We are in a very happy position because I can say 0% (dependence on grants) with hand on heart*
- *What's emerging from the discussion is that we can probably keep the woods ticking over but there ain't gonna be too much in the way of development and improvement and new commitments unless we can get some funding.*

In most cases where groups do not own or lease their woodlands, CWGs can afford to fund their basic running costs from within their own resources. Once the essential tools are purchased replacement costs are low and basic group administration costs can usually be covered from internal sources. Insurance is usually the major cost and in some cases this is paid by the landowner.

Any new projects and initiatives, and major maintenance items are however a different matter, and for these groups will continue to remain dependent on (chiefly) public sources.



- ... we did use to get a grant from the Parish Council. When we look at what our major cost is, our one big cost in any one year is insurance. Beyond that we spend very little, we own all our own tools.
- Ours is a Town Council owned and we get insurance paid and we get funding. We have our insurance through BTCV but the council pay for it.

Table 2 gives the sources of funding accessed by at least one of the CWGs.

<b>Sources of funding</b>	
•	Community Contracting Initiative – Mersey Forest
•	BTCV
•	Landfill
•	Primary Care Trust (health)
•	Lottery funding (Awards for All)
•	Forestry Commission (EWGS)
•	County, town, district, parish councils
•	Housing association
•	Woodland Trust
•	Action Earth
•	Tree Council

**Table 2. Main sources of funding for CWGs (Northwest region)**

Levels of knowledge and fundraising success were variable, but of course this is a product of the objectives of the group involved and their tenure of their woodland. A group that owns a woodland will have greater outgoings, and a group more involved in educational projects, for example, will need to access external funding.

Some groups have considerable experience in this area, and displayed particular insights into the politics of fundraising.

- *Because we are a residents association we regard the woodland as an environmental arm and the other arm is to do with the community. Being a residents association you've got access to better funding from different sources than if you are just for want of a word "tree huggers". It's really hard to get money on green environmental projects but you can bring in social aspects into an environment project and get money*
- *Because you're on council land, putting things in the ground trees and things like that. We won't fund that because the council should be funding that.*
- *The trouble with that is that we have to do it direct we are discovering in our old age that it's really better if the local authority negotiate with those people and get the funding that's why we won't go with the BBC otherwise we have to do all the work of filling in the forms and its much better if it goes to the local authority who have people who do that.*
- *Do any of you get wayleave payments? We get an electric wayleave, it's only £40 a year but it's £40 per year for ever.*
- *We get Entry Level Stewardship on woodland and we've applied for the single farm payment on woodland.*

#### **4.5.2 Woodland management**

##### **Internal sources**

Many groups had members who were professionally trained and needed no external advice – rangers, tree surgeons, chartered foresters.

- *.....what did emerge is just how good we are. No great need to call on outside expertise. We mostly have people who have the necessary qualifications to give us advice so it hasn't been a problem we've had to seriously address.*
- *Felling licence - I must have done quite well it took me two weeks to fill it in. I did selectively hand mark 500 trees myself. I was scared to hell it was the first time I'd ever done it, I followed the guidelines and went round marked all the trees, chose them very carefully, looked at all the situations, measured everything, wrote it all down, went back to all the figures, filled in the forms and I hope that's right because my head hurts.*

##### **External sources**

County council staff,- Coast and Countryside, FWAG. Silvanus Trust, Working Woodlands. Forestry Commission, BTCV, Wildlife Trusts, Park rangers South West Forest, FWAG, AONB staff, county council woodland officer, Woodland Trust

Community Woodland office, Mersey Forest, Oxfordshire Woodland Project were all cited as sources of support.

It was surprising to find out that few groups had contacted the Forestry Commission for advice, and most were not aware that any advice and support could be obtained from them. The comments about the Forestry Commission were generally negative. However, these were plainly based on hearsay and perceptions gained through other means rather than direct experience as so few of the groups' members had actually ever had direct contact with the Forestry Commission. A further cause of these negative attitudes could be CWGs holding unrealistic expectations about any support and funding that might be provided, alongside a general lack of awareness of the staffing and financial constraints the Forestry Commission is under itself.

- *The general view of the FC is that they're now concerned about their own estate and their little empire looking after themselves. I'm sorry to say it.*
- *I knew we could get grants from them potentially but it hadn't occurred to me we could ask for advice.*
- *One of the reasons we tended not to go to the FC, every county has its local Wildlife Trust closer to what you're doing. Everyone thinks of the FC as a big national body, maybe the perception is wrong.*
- *It's very difficult because they are not local - you are told to ring Edinburgh.*

In contrast groups were enthusiastic about the advice they had obtained from a range of woodland initiatives, often those with a specific community woodland or community engagement remit.

- *We work very closely with Mersey Forest from a woodland management point of view but any specific ideas we would speak to Mersey Forest but it would be done in partnership with the local authority because their employees (the contractors) Glendale so we work with them in managing the woodland.*
- *I suppose we are lucky in Oxfordshire because we have a small woodland officer (Oxfordshire Woodland Project) who can come and talk to us about management in community woods and our project manager is a chartered forester anyway.*

Where groups have looked for advice they often have been disappointed with the response or the quality of that advice, or how best to use the advice given within their own woodland context. The following quotes illustrate the range of issues mentioned.

- *One of the things that rankles with me..... they sent a little guy who'd learned to use a hoe in the parks department who was challenging the judgement of our chartered forester*
- *It's about meeting someone and having confidence in what they are talking about. I spoke to someone last week from the County Council, very nice person, I had one or two useful suggestions but then they resorted to referring me to the BTCV.*
- *On the woodland management side I think it's varied. I would like to have more confidence on a particular source of advice and I've not got that from anybody.*
- *Where would I go. I don't know. I've tried the Woodland Trust they've knocked me back.*
- *Not having found a source that gives good advice. We go to lots of so called experts and we get lots of different advice. They all overlap but we don't get the definite this is the best thing you can do with your copse. I think the reason is that most of the specialist advice is based on Forestry Commission type things, large areas where a management plan can be set up with an obvious main objective, whereas these small woods, take ours for example, we've got to look after the dormice, sell a bit of product, restore the coppice cycle, open the ride so that the butterflies and the insects do well. We haven't found a specialist in that kind of management.*
- *I think it's the practical side. It's meeting people that you feel are foresters, are people who actually work in the woodland and know it and have had many years experience and when the right person comes along you feel right in what they are telling you and we are not getting that.*
- *We've got some problems with the Parish Council at the moment, I'm on that, and getting our tree officer to look at a tree for us is nearly impossible.*
- *It comes back to what some of us were saying, when there are so many organisations you get just get sort of....you don't know where to go.*

One group member summed up the general feeling very well when they said:

- *..... there is a feeling that we need people who have got practical, real good knowledge about forestry and forestry environments who can actually size up that situation with a local group actually on the side, perhaps help produce a plan of the kind of things that need to be done and from that will fall out the kind of training that you need.*

As mentioned earlier, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the roles of, and the constraints on, the organisations that can provide different kinds of support to CWGs. This can result in unrealistic expectations and subsequent unsatisfying outcomes. Funding priorities change but it is difficult for CWGs to keep up and understand why support fluctuates or what the new emphases might be.

Organisations such as the Woodland Trust and the wildlife trusts are not, in general, funded to provide individual support for specific groups, whereas some woodland initiatives and community forest (such as Mersey Forest and the Oxfordshire Woodland Project mentioned in this study) are staffed and funded to provide such individual advice and support. It is the complexity of the funding and organisational landscape which CWGs find difficult to navigate.

#### **4.5.3 Health and safety**

Groups are generally aware of the safety implications of their activities, and most either carry out risk assessments themselves or a partner organisation will. Few groups had arranged training in risk assessment, however, and were largely 'self taught' and because they lack training the standard is probably uneven.

- *Most people who work have to know about health and safety, we all have personal awareness but we've never actually sent someone in the group on a course*
- *you don't need to be trained to do the Risk Assessment but you have to have a chainsaw ticket to use a chainsaw. One is a bit loose and the other is nailed down and yet probably the risk assessment is the most important part of that.*
- *I just went to a local recycling group and borrowed their Health and Safety Policy*
- *And then we try and make sure we have the paperwork to say that we've done our risk management so if anything goes wrong....we are quite assiduous at doing that, it gets quite boring frankly. The more effort you put in the easier it gets later on.*

*Con't*

- *our group has grown up so that a group of volunteers get together and trim things or whatever, it's often public footpaths or whatever so every day someone assesses the site gives a safety talk, we have an activity leader who sort of oversees it.*
- *Depending on what your activity is you fill in the Risk Assessment yourself and you assess the area yourself and what's happening. (Have you had training to do that?) Not as such, I don't have a qualification so I don't teach that much. I'm teaching one thing tomorrow but the people who are funding that don't actually require me to have a teaching qualification. We do have public liability insurance and I am very health and safety aware.*
- *We do a lot of it from our own internal resources, people with experience go along with assessments that we've written.*

Groups would obtain specific health and safety advice from site owners if appropriate, or from appropriate groups depending on the issue.

- *I told them we created a wetland area and they insisted the path be closed when it was getting a bit dangerous. We've been to the Wildlife Trust too when we were creating the wetlands area, we went to them about what we should do, should we fence it or whatever. So we've had advice from them about health and safety.*

#### **4.5.4 Community engagement**

Groups use a wide range of methods to get information about their activities out into the local community, from press releases, newsletters, notice boards and flyers to the internet. Less priority seems in general to be given to community consultation and feedback from local people, and for most groups is confined to unsolicited comment.

- *We are the community, we publish a newsletter, there's a reply line and an email reply line. If anyone's got any beefs about it ring in later and we'll answer the question. We tell people before the event, don't argue about it afterwards.*
- *We have a village magazine or bulletin that goes to every house in the village four times a year. If anyone wants to talk about anything or have a problem with the wood they will phone me or phone one of the others. Most of the members are old time village residents, who are well known in the village so the people who sort of use it are not shy of telling people what they think. And it can feed back that way. If anyone has anything to raise they will phone or they will contact one or two of the Parish Councillors who will pass it on.*
- *Going from a residents association group to a green environmental group is a big advantage because it's where your routes are, so you know the people, you've got the communication links, you've got your newsletters in place, you're just doing flowers and trees. It's just an extension of the group. We've met people who only do green environmental issues and they don't talk to anybody because they haven't got the package in place – it's really helpful to us.*
- *We do a newsletter 3 times a year, noticeboards, one on the entrance to the wood and one in the centre of the village and that updates people. One of the big contacts for getting new members, we have a village fete and we always have a stand there. You get several hundred visitors on the day there. We also have two magazines, one published by the local church, which goes to every house in the village. We frequently write articles for that.*

*On the woodland we bought two advertising sites with bashproof glass so the vandals can't break it. So we put all our adverts in there and people who use the woodland, customers, see the notices and they ring us. But the main thing is newsletters really, the hard slog of producing it is well worth it. It gives people advance notice of what's going on. When they go to social level say Easter Egg Hunt, the local school will be told by email or fax and the mothers get told by the schools and the school groups.*

- *The Civic Society helped with newsletter, done letter drops, the press. We have a notice board too. The Civic Society has a website we have a feature on that*

- *We have a newsletter 6 weekly basis but that is going out under the heading of the residents association. They have helped. We have three notice boards, two in the woods and one on a children's playground which we manage in partnership with the Civic Council but it's a swing park. We are just opening up a website we are opening ours on the back of Mersey Forest.*
- *I wouldn't regard the website as important I think its more important to try and get information to people which is why I send the newsletter to people but I wish I had a bigger database.*
- *You can be cynical about it the website ticks the box on the application form.*
- *We did consultations via the council they mailed stuff out for us. Community engagement I produce a newsletter, I don't know how long I'll keep producing it. Monthly most of the year and I put articles in other ones. Getting that engagement that's the problem.*
- *(websites)....I think its more important for the outside world who wants to google you and see what you are doing*
- *Community engagement is something that you've got to do and it's crucial that you are seen to be doing it. Frankly we decided what we wanted go out to consultation and then do what we first decided to do it's as simple as that.*
- *In early days when we started - the council. They gave us advice on everything but more and more we have become self motivated. Things like how we get more community engagement mainly comes from our own committee.*
- *When you look at all those - most of the advice comes from within our own committee and our own membership at least.*
- *We are just trying to stay in contact with other local groups as much as possible*
- *We struggled, we felt very lonely when we started up.*
- *We have an annual stall at the Parish Fair it really helps*
- *We have a market in a large hall and we are a presence in the market once a month.*

#### **4.5.5 Conflicts**

Most groups have some experience of dealing with conflict, which varies in form and severity from antisocial behaviour in woodland to disputes between people within the group.

Relationships with the police are cordial, and they are often the first organisation to be asked to help in serious conflict.



- *The local inspector, he comes to our Christmas show as well. The bobbies look after our interest and we look after theirs.*
- *... we had loads of stuff dumped in the pond. We had a bad neighbour - fridges, cars, all sorts in this pond. We'll bring a JCB and a tow truck and we'll pull it out and fill three skips with metal and we photographed it and someone saw the photos ..... The guy was a tyre merchant dumping his tyres and his wheels in this pond. The police did him.*
- *Police - we engage with the police from a security point of view. We've had meetings regarding some of the gateways. We now have a city watch from a security company who comes out.*
- *We've had plenty of rows it's the joy of the public you can't please hardly anyone, hardly any of the time when you are dealing with the public. Actually we've sort of muddled through ourselves - if it really got bad the Police. Our car park was the favourite haunt of druggies. The Police are very good about coming round and checking on the car park. We get bits of deer, the carcasses of deer dumped in the car park by poachers, which is very distressing for the dog walkers because the dogs go in and drag all the bits out. It's not really things they can do much about, it's not conflict one to one, we also get some of that.*
- *We've tried the local PCSO (police community support officer) they can't do a lot - waste of space. He's very nice and keen but he's only limited and he's not 24 hours a day. He goes home when they are out there (misbehaving young people).*

Dog fouling and other dog related issues were a major source of dispute that most CWGs had to deal with regularly, as the following volume of comments suggests.

- *Because it's so popular and you get more and more people walking their dogs. The Local Authority have now said in their areas dogs have got to be on a lead more or less so now we get even more going through the wood and letting them off the lead, so we're moving to the stage of having to say the same. So that's a conflict. There are a lot of dog walkers who let them off the lead and keep perfect control of them but there's others who don't. They are running wild and knocking down some of the trees. It's mess as well, a lot of them have got used to the idea of off the path. They won't let their dogs go on the path they think it's perfectly all right to go in the woodland where we of course go and work in there and get it caked on our boots.*
- *Quite interesting over here that the dog situation can sometimes be resolved by the dog walkers because they don't want to get told off for something that isn't their responsibility.*
- *I think it's clear there is a policy of non engagement in conflicts in local communities. I don't know if that is something that has been passed down through the Local Authority's network. There are times as landowner they have backed off too much and I'm not happy about one or two things. It's clear they are more or less saying you have to resolve it in the community which is easier said than done. We're putting all the bloody hours in.*
- *Dog walking is the nearest thing to civil war.*
- *Dog owners are the biggest users of the woods. Speaker 1*
- *That's one of the problems. Speaker 2*
- *That's another conflict. Speaker 3*
- *We have dog owners who come and apologise because of the rest.*

Changes in management or ownership of woodlands can trigger disputes with neighbours or local people. The community often become used to seeing or using the woodland in a certain way, so changes present challenges to cultural, social and legal norms.

- *The only conflict we have is with an adjoining landowner who was unhappy we were planting trees.*
- *we did have conflicts over a 5 year period this wildlife corridor or simply wildflowers and bramble coming through the railing onto the high street pavement. To see the grasses and the poppies and all the other stuff that's come through people didn't want it. It's taken 4 or 5 years, people saying it doesn't look bad.*
- *People didn't like us cutting down rhododendrons but now they know that it's so much neater, cleaner, flowers are growing.*
- *Ownership issues in that people have been used to walking on the site and no matter how much you try and consult. We've had fences cut.*
- *And also especially when we first started, within the group and people who were using the woodland, okay we'll do some brushing and brambles and things like that and then we found that half the group were actually going to treat the woodland like their garden so they wanted to make the woodland all neat and tidy all the rubbish swept out the way and the other half of us that were the environmental lot were going to leave the debris for the woodland habitat and then the dog walkers would come through and say "a right mess has been made of that".*

Internal conflicts within the group can often be very difficult to deal with. The groups mentioned a number of occasions where disputes arose, but in each case the problem was resolved without outside assistance.

- *I've been volunteering for nearly 3 years now and the nature of the people who are normally involved in this sort of thing don't normally create conflict. The nature of the people, unless it is something that is rock solid against their opinion, usually will go with the flow of the majority of people.*
- *Our volunteers are mainly retired and depending what you did before, one of them was a manager, he expected whatever he said to be done, so it is a bit of a conflict sometimes.*
- *We had a difficult situation last year. A new committee member who volunteered to do our website then, we didn't have a constitution at the time. He started trying to arrange things himself so he had a surveyor to try and put in a running track and this was council owned land. He just went completely off the wall, fortunately we fell out enough that he dropped out entirely. But we then wrote a very robust constitution to stop any of our members losing the plot in the future.*

A group that had jointly purchased a woodland had particular conflicts to begin with.

- *Letters to the paper, not public meetings but a lot of public engagement, we have a stall in the local market once a month so people can come up and chat to us. They are on board now so it was rocky to start with.*
- *We've tried to resolve conflict with them just by continually offering open friendship saying you feel free to use the woodland walks whenever you want, the kids can still play in the woodland, we are not excluding them from it.*

## 4.6 Training

### Internal – passing on of skills

Much training is carried out internally within groups either by professionals who have brought skills to the groups or by group members who have received external training and then brought that knowledge into the group. Some groups are relatively self sufficient whereas others have identified gaps and are attempting to fill these with variable success.

- *We don't need the fundraising or the computer courses, we have lots of people in the village, IT consultant and all sorts.*
- *A lot of training is done internally and when you are on voluntary days out, the input is usually before the activity to gauge who is actually there to make sure they know what they are doing. Usually for tree planting it's done internally by an experienced person who has had the training before.*
- *In our area that is quite well organised but again internally through people who have got a passion for it.*
- *.....our training takes place internally. So that those people who have been trained up will then be passing on their skills to other volunteer group meetings, where we are going out to do a bit of digging or planting or raking or whatever and we would have one of those members that have been trained up, he will always set the piece by having a small meeting before we start work and tell them you don't put a rake down this way you put it that way.*
- *Part of the group is the nest box recorder for the area. He's been trained by the BTO [British Trust for Ornithology], so a lot of people will join to use their skills. So if someone has got a big interest in moths so they'll say I'll come and volunteer but can I also....so we've had the moth count every morning.*
- *Our community woodland, I was a user before I got involved. And as soon as you go in and get to know the volunteer group it is unbelievable what is actually going on on the quiet by organisation, by people. Someone's interested in the bats so he does the monitoring and the recording. We've got some guy who is the local ecologist who's into moths and butterflies and mammal surveys and he does it nationwide and then that just spins off to*

Two cases were mentioned of group members attending courses run by other community woodland groups – scything in one case and coppicing in the other. One group commented on the content of courses – how a coppicing course was more geared to the needs of the general public rather than volunteers who need to know in more depth. This is the strength of groups learning from each other.

- *It's all this management stuff that's why we did our own coppicing course because all the other ones were very very general. How to run an outdoor activity day, they only used a little bit of coppicing as an example of how to run the day. (courses aimed at interested individuals not enough for groups who manage woodland)*
- *The trouble with courses you're out of your environment. It's better if you learn on site.*

#### **4.6.1 Training previously/currently received**

##### **Administration/Health and safety**

The groups were all aware of the need to address health and safety issues, and the provision varied according to the degree of ownership. Most groups had members with first aid qualifications and some relied on trained rangers who accompanied them on practical task days. Some fortunate groups had members who were professionally qualified (paramedics or nurses). Training had been provided by BTCV, Red Cross, private companies or St Johns Ambulance.

All groups were aware of the need to produce risk assessments although the level of understanding of the process was uneven. In some cases these were provided by council or other professional staff working with the groups, in others by group members. Few of the groups had received formal training in risk assessment.

Few groups had received any advice or training on child and vulnerable adult protection and many were rather overwhelmed by the idea of becoming involved in that area. This seemed to act as a considerable disincentive to entering new areas of activity where this might be necessary.

##### **Practical skills**

All groups with a need for it had members who had received chainsaw and other machinery training. This was usually provided through BTCV or local colleges, and funded by the groups themselves, the council, local woodland initiative or in one case by a group member. One group had members trained in herbicide use.

Groups had received training in a wide range of woodland crafts such as

wood turning, hurdle making, tree thinning, tree pruning, formative pruning, hedge laying - professional hedge layer, tree planting, coppicing, wild flower management apple pruning, walling, coppicing, hand tool repair, ditching, forest gardens. This was provided by local woodland initiatives, the council, local AONB wardens, national Wildflower Centre, Devon Rural Skills Trust and a range of others.

Advice does tend to shade into training – a visit from a staff member from a local woodland initiative involving a walk around the woodland can at least as valuable for passing on skills as a formal training course

- *We've had (3 of us) a museum talk specifically for people who were interested in keeping bees, the bumble bee in the main. We agreed to go into a little project, a 3 year project, we are 18 months through and we have located something like 50/60 areas around the whole of the woods facing different directions and it's all been mapped and we're keeping an eye on this bee population. We cut a piece of wood and drilled holes in with a bit of mice droppings in the holes just to attract the bees and we're locating them around.*

#### **4.6.2 Training needed in the future**

##### **Administration/health and safety**

- *Initial courses easy to find funding for, refreshers are the problem But the other point that's been raised, having once got it you have to have refresher training. And that is not fundable and as an ongoing liability.*
- *We do risk assessments but we haven't had any training as such*
- *... what people would like is some sort of website or guidance about how to set up a community woodland group from scratch, what skills you need, what training you need, what you need in terms of constitution, insurance.*
- *We haven't got anyone officially trained up for first aid, we've got first aid kit and things so we probably ought to get that formalised now.*
- *Training on child protection/CRBs etc needed/responsibilities for groups, and data protection.*
- *Needs more networking between groups, started by Woodland Trust but needs to be independent.*
- *Training on planning issues needed, also woodland history and working with other groups*

Funding compulsory refresher training in first aid (and in practical skills such as chainsaw use) is a particular issue for CWGs. They found it reasonably

straightforward to put members through the initial training but the high cost of updates was proving hard to fund. As mentioned in the last section groups had received little training in child protection and similar issues, and a number identified this area as one where they needed additional knowledge and skills.

Networking and working with other groups were also areas where groups lacked confidence and would appreciate training (or facilitation).

### **Practical skills**

Many groups wanted training in basic woodland management theory.

- *....a course in something like basic woodland management so they didn't have anyone on their committees that were actually trained foresters. That was the gap in training they identified.*
- *Management plan preparation training needed.*
- *Need basic woodland management, how to get more people involved.*
- *Woodland management because you are never going to get to the end of knowing more and needing to know more about woodland management.*
- *Good coppice training – depends on objectives as coppicing for produce not necessarily the same as coppicing for conservation.*

Groups also showed a desire for additional training in broader biodiversity areas such as wildlife surveying (small mammal and butterfly surveying). As noted above one group has shown a developing interest in bumble bee conservation, and supporting groups in this area would potentially enhance group interest, increase volunteer numbers and for wildlife organisations provide access to sites that can perhaps be otherwise inaccessible.

### **4.6.3 Training: General comments**

The comments which emerged from the discussion groups suggest that there is uneven provision in training, CWGs seem to find it much easier to access training where a woodland initiative is active in an area, otherwise it is hard to find and to join appropriate training courses. Training courses seem as important for networking and reinforcing confidence as for the formal transfer of skills and competencies. Informal training in the form of 'advisory' visits can also be invaluable.

- *This is the one issue where there really are differences between people's experiences. I'm the poor man. If you are part of the Mersey Forest you get flowing down from that various funding streams. CCI is one. [Community Contracting Initiative]*
- *What would be useful to you would be an organisation with individuals that could come and spend a day with you walking the woodland and flagging up opportunities and things like that.*
- *It's extremely patchy the provision for things like this, in some areas there are woodland initiatives that can provide that service.*
- *We are all amateurs learning on the job whether it's a good thing or a bad thing.*
- *That's why I really want to talk to someone who knows.*
- *Just getting one forester who knows what he's talking about.*
- *One thing that's really good about courses is when you're muddling through on your own you begin to have your doubts. You go on a course and you meet other muddlers, you think oh well our muddle is no worse than their muddle.*

#### **4.7 The £10,000 windfall**

Attendees were asked if they were given an unexpected donation of £10,000 how they would spend the money. In most case the groups had to think really hard to come up with ways of spending this windfall – none of them had a project or proposal that was ready to go that they were eager for funding to take forward. A number commented that the sum was too large – a few hundred pounds would enable them to meet any pressing needs. Most of the groups had all the tools they needed (they were limited by the volunteers to use them). One group commented that they don't need funding of that size on a practical level, but a sum like that would ensure that the group continues in the future in case present funding dries up. The final list of suggestions on how to spend the money is outlined in Table 3 below. It is interesting to note that the purchase of more woodland and the building or renovation of existing structures to provide better facilities for visitors and users were amongst the most important suggestions.



Category	Wish list
Land/woodland acquisition	Buy land to extend woodland Buy land to link two small areas of woodland 200m apart Land for woodland creation and forest garden
Building	Feasibility study to bring cafe and toilets back into use Car parking Match funding for visitor centre Storage for tools etc Tepees/yurts for people who come for courses Bio-loo Secure store Convert barn to educational centre
Education/revenue funding	Funding for education programme Need consistent funding for a few years to do good educational work. Training fund Tools/minibus for school groups
Woodland improvements	Fencing woodland Create a pond Dedicated bridle path to reduce conflicts where horses use footpaths and damage surface Boardwalk, fencing Wildlife initiatives Borehole for irrigating new woodland/forest garden Drainage of a very wet site Improve access
Machinery	Log chute Buy mobile saw Develop wood gasification to power machinery

**Table 3. How CWGs would use a £10,000 windfall**

#### **4.8 Barriers**

Here the subgroups were asked to discuss the main barriers to the smooth, enjoyable, productive and safe operation of their CWGs. In short what makes life difficult for them and what prevents them expanding or broadening their activities. There was broad agreement on the main issues impacting on groups and the management of their woodlands.

### 4.8.1 Group issues

All of the discussion groups identified a lack of active volunteers as a major problem, both in terms of its impact on their current operations but also the future sustainability of the group.

- *Its usually just 2 or 3 individuals are the backbone of any society and how it goes.*
- *20% of the people do 80% of the work.*

In all cases it was noted that the backbone of all the groups were active retired people who, while having a broad range of skills and experience can be limited in their physical capabilities.

- *I've got a heart condition, John's got a heart condition, Billy has got a bad leg - half of the committee is disabled.*
- *I'm relatively young I'm 62 but I retired because I wanted to do something like this, If pension age is going to be up to 65 or 68 even, is there going to be less people around of an age to do this.*
- *In my constituency its quite definitely active retired people.*
- *These people are valuable because they have so much experience in life and some of them come from a biological background or something and they know what they are talking about.*

There was some discussion around the difficulties of attracting people in their 20s and 30s.

- *... the people who are more involved tend to be the older people and it's harder to involve the people in their 20's and 30's.*
- *We haven't got anybody in that age group.*
- *They haven't got the time to put into it at all, they have young families ... they've got mortgages.*

It's also a question of ownership, both physical and psychological. As one participant observed, many people are happy to take advantage of the hard work of a small minority without wanting to get involved themselves.

- *Always struggling for people. There's plenty of people that walk past and say you are doing a good job, there's a muddy bit down there. But they won't actually roll up their sleeves and come and help us.*

For some participants, people who wanted to join a group for their own reasons had been a major issue.

- *It's sort of Joe Public being totally unrealistic, when we started up we had several people who wanted to join, they didn't want committees they didn't want constitutions, they wanted to just get their chainsaw and just go up and manage the woodland as they saw fit in a public access area. And actually it would have been a disaster. And though they thought officialdom was a problem, it keeps the wider community safe if you've got all these things in place.*
- *We had some, if you like, social oddballs, who would like to take chainsaws up in the woodland on their own. They didn't want to be part of a group at all and frankly you can't do that.*

Group sustainability is a major concern to many groups, both in terms of transferring 'ownership' to a new generation but also passing on hard earned experience and skills.

- *Looking forward to the future, unless there are volunteers there won't be a future.*
- *We are all getting older and one of the barriers is going to be bringing in younger people so they carry on.*
- *There's some anxiety about a shortage of volunteers. The people coming along who are going to take over from us and a feeling that it's too late when they are needed, they need to start now, whilst we're still here to show them what to do.*

#### **4.8.2 Insensitive and inconsistent planning system**

For a number of groups with ambitions to manage their woodland in a productive way with multiple objectives (notably in the South West) with the aim of using their woodland activities to justify living in their woodlands the planning system was a major barrier. Forestry is poorly defined in the planning system, and the level of knowledge in planning departments is very uneven leading to inconsistencies in interpretation of the law.

- *I'd have to say planning interpretation. The law is quite good but it's the local planning officers.*
- *You'd go to another local authority 50 miles up the road and you would get a different reaction.*

#### 4.8.3 Legislation/regulation

'Red tape' featured much less in the 'barriers' discussions than might have been expected. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) applied to all or part of a number of woodlands, and in general did not impact unfavourably on the group's plans and activities. For some groups the lack of urgency and inflexibility shown by some local authorities was an issue.

- *We are in a conservation area which is a block TPO (Tree Preservation Order). What we said to the council was we've identified a dangerous tree it can cause injury to members of the public and we're offering free of charge to cut the offending tree down or trim it or whatever, the work that's needed. If you are going to refuse to give permission to do that what we'll do, if anyone is injured, we will name you and the City Council as being responsible for it and if you don't do it it's entirely in your hands.*
- *So it's something we all have. We started it for the local planning authority because they want to examine every tree we want to take down. Tree preservation on the whole wood. If you want to act quickly you can't. We've had difficulty because the local planning who wish to exercise control but won't give answers to the questions. 3-6 months later you haven't had a reply. So what we are doing is producing a management plan which includes the felling of dangerous trees and get them to accept it.*

Legislation on protection of children and vulnerable adults was a barrier for some groups where they were keen to extend their educational activities but for whom the legislation and requirements were too demanding and confusing.

- *If you want education events you need CRB checks, insurance, risk assessments. I won't touch that. I don't think any of our groups in Basingstoke will touch that. It's a nightmare.*

#### 4.8.4 Anti social behaviour

Unsurprisingly vandalism and other anti social behaviour was seen as an issue for many although its importance varied from group to group broadly depending on

whether a woodland was in or near an urban area.

- *Our vandalism is more to do with litter. As urban fringe we get lots of cans and bottles, I'm staggered at the amount of cans and bottles we get and the other big problem is dog fouling and I include that as vandalism.*

What was highlighted as especially dispiriting is vandalism following specific tasks or actions carried out by the group.

- *The worst was the local garden society bought us an oak tree to plant in the millennium year... and it did fine for about 4/5 years and we went in one day and someone deliberately hacked it off at the top. It's regrowing from what was left.*
- *Vandalism must play a part as a barrier. If they keep taking plants out you have to keep putting them back and putting them back until they get fed up with it.*

For other groups unauthorised activities and major acts of vandalism can have major cost implications.

- *I had a car driven into the woods and they drove up against a nut tree, they set fire to it three days after they had driven it into the woods. People in the flats that overlooked it - "we didn't see anything" "we didn't hear anything"*
- *Do you get motorbikes and quadbikes. Speaker 1*
- *We put gates on ours so they can't get in Speaker2*
- *Oh they go through the hedge, it's more fun going through the hedge. Speaker 3*

One group found one management action designed to deliver a biodiversity objective had a positive impact on antisocial behaviour and access to the woodland.

- *As we found the simple act of taking those rhododendrons away from the woods generally, people didn't want to go along that pathway before now we have a wider path, it's now freer to walk through, lighter, cleaner and you can also see there's no yobbos, strangers in the background. Instead of yobbos we've got daffodils!*

In one event a useful discussion was held around approaches to dealing with anti social behaviour.

- ... and (the site owner) *has decided that they are going to turn it into a play area and the main feature that I've asked for is a 6ft fence right along the top of the woods to stop their balls etc going into the woods and also people are not going to start throwing balls over a 6ft fence.*
- *I just wonder if putting up a 6ft fence and keeping them out makes them more likely to want to damage it, whereas if you actually say to them this is yours you've got to look after it too.*

#### **4.8.5 Liability**

There was little evidence that the much discussed 'claims culture' was having a direct impact on groups' activities, but in two cases plans that groups had were frustrated by the unwillingness of schools to accept the responsibility of bringing groups into the woodlands.

- *I tried to bring schools in, when we first started up, they did the plans for us and made plans of what we wanted to do in the woods was all done by a school and now the teachers say they will not be responsible for taking children into the woods because they are liable. And we have point blank refused to take them because we haven't got the time to do it and we don't want the responsibility of looking after a lot of little hooligans in the wood.*
- *This is what we tried to get the local school nearest to us to do and we've got 5 schools and we can't get any of the teachers to take responsibility to take the kids in the wood.*

#### **4.8.6 Fundraising**

Grant scheme inflexibility was identified as an issue of major concern to the groups. As volunteers it is hard for them, without experienced professional support, to develop schemes and applications to successfully meet funders criteria using long and complex forms and unfamiliar terms and concepts.

- *(Time) is becoming a problem - the forms are getting longer.*
- *It's the proof, having to provide evidence of the exact objectives and the outcomes.*
- *And we also feel there should be more flexibility in the grant system in that if you apply for a grant and you can't tick every single one of the boxes you can be ruled out. There's no flexibility for schemes which everyone says that's great, wonderful idea, it doesn't quite fit our profile because, and it's some minor thing.*
- *The grant criteria are a problem. When you make an application it's like watching paint dry. The funding applications are too strict and they are stifling good ideas.*
- *They are restrictive in that they won't even look unless it's exactly the profile. There's no one to say that's a bloody good scheme, it's slightly off beam but...*

Match funding is a major issue for voluntary groups in general, not just community woodland groups.

- *Also if you've got to do matching funding. The previous project I was involved with the Borough Council would put some money forward as long as we had some other money coming from somewhere else. Everything was conditional on everything else, then when someone changed, like our local county councillor had a budget she could put some money in from, she gave us £2,000 instead of £1,000. I had to go back and change all the other grants saying actually we want £6,000 not £7,000, actually we want £10,000 not £11K and you've got these three things going on at once depending on each other and if someone isn't taking care of all of it, it can get lost.*
- *they wanted to know there was another grant. I forget what the percentage was.*
- *We had one like that - a local granting body, I can't remember the name now it's purely for the Basingstoke area, but we had to get grants from somebody else as well before they would fund part of it.*

The general consensus was that although most were confident about their abilities to access small grants, they were less sure about their ability to develop and submit larger funding proposals, and would welcome more dedicated funding support including an advisor

- *We are all comfortable being able to get £200 to knock that post down or whatever it is but the large scale initiatives don't seem to be covered by the system.*
- *..... a dedicated funding advisor to go for really large grants, by large grants I mean in excess of £50,000/£60,000 plus. The cafe is a real workable goer. It's the top end of funding.*
- *There's some anxiety about the grant situation, in the sense that we feel there is scope for a fund advisor particularly for large grants and the sort of things that amount to major initiatives.*

Groups are concerned about future prospects for public funding, as the short term nature has left many of them vulnerable to changing public sector funding and priorities.

- *What we want is long term investment from the funding authorities.*
- *I think finance in the future is going to be more of a barrier than it has been because of the cut backs in funding.*
- *Everybody is telling us about funding arrangements are to be cutback by at least 20%*

A number of issues were identified with Forestry Commission funding from the small number of groups who had dealings with them. There were only the following two comments from the discussion groups, which reflect the limited contact most CWGs have had with FC, and also that where CWGs are involved with woodlands owned by others, contact with FC officers and any grant funding would be via the owners' representatives.

### **Unreliable support**

A common comment was the inconsistent support that some groups received from organisations, probably related to short term priorities and funding within those organisations. Groups try to think long term but are frustrated and disillusioned with uneven advice and support. Some groups are happy to be more independent than others, but the degree of support and advice they need ideally should be related to the needs and desires of the group rather than the priorities of the organisation. Support can be provided as part of time limited projects, often with no exit strategy, which can cause problems when this support disappears.



- *There is someone in the village (from Forestry Commission) she's been to one of our meetings but we haven't seen her since.*
- *We found that too that we had someone from Natural England or the tree preservation office and you thought great. and then they disappear.*
- *This is going back to the Forestry Commission and their red tape and lack of support, I know they are funding this but I'm glad that you are presenting it not them, because I think you are much more grass roots up version rather than their top down version. But they need to give us something in return - we've all given up our Saturday afternoons - I don't see why they turned down a management plan 3 times for our site. They say it's a small site, yes small woods are important.*
- *We've changed ours to the afternoons because the treasurer is from Sovereign Housing but she doesn't come at all now because she has had promotion. She does the books for us but she wants us to try and find someone else. Twice I've had a secretary say she will do the job and they've turned up to one meeting and never been back. Then we had someone she did the minutes twice and she was doing something on the computer at work for us and the boss went past and threatened to sack her.*
- *Is it alright just to ask if these people from agencies, are they coming in their own personal capacity or are they coming as representatives of the organisation because, if professional you'd expect them to come and then not come unless you ask them to. If it's personal you can't really expect them to come.*

Some of these comments reflect the somewhat unrealistic expectations that CWGs can have about the resources that organisations have to support such groups. Some organisations can provide general advice, for example, but are not resourced to provide targeted advice to individual groups, such as advisory visits. Staff cannot reasonably be expected to attend all group meetings, for example. CWGs need a lower level of targeted support/grant funding over a longer period of time.

### **Finding sites – woodland and for planting**

The scarcity and high price of woodland and land for planting, especially in some areas, are issues for groups looking to acquire woodlands or extend their existing woodland.

### **Lack of appreciation/recognition/understanding by local community and organisations**

The disconnect between people and the natural environment is plain in discussions around community understanding of woodland management and what groups are trying to do. This feeds through into a lack of volunteers willing to get involved, perhaps because they don't understand what is involved or what groups are trying to do.

- ..... It's not just public awareness, awareness of the products of the wood so if you are coppicing for coppice products or making charcoal for charcoal products, you can produce them but you just need people to be aware of the fact that you are making them.
- The problem is they just want somewhere to walk their dogs and they are not interested how it got there.
- It's conservative with a small 'c' generation who have no idea or interest
- The trouble is however much communication you do 90% of the community are interested and accept everything you do, it's just a few percent who, it doesn't matter how much you do, are either going to vandalise things or object to what you are doing.

Some of the groups working in sites owned by the local council or other organisations felt unappreciated. They felt they were doing a lot of work that the council would otherwise have to deal with, and the occasional award or 'thank you' would be very welcome.

#### **Low value of timber products**

Groups having timber production as a main objective were frustrated by the economics of small volume/small woodland production. There was a lot of useful discussion at the meetings where groups producing products from their woodland passed on a lot of useful ideas to others who had little experience.

- Difficult extracting from a small wood in any economically viable method. Having a harvester in for 2 hours is just not viable, you have to have it in for a day or two and you have to have a lot of timber just ready to go. It doesn't work like that in a small woodland

#### **Lack of dedicated website**

Opinions were divided on websites. Some groups had pages on council or similar websites, but were not happy with the degree of control.

- What's on offer from Mersey Forest is a user group website that's not quite the same because we do all sorts of things apart from woodland we need to cover the social aspects.
- Ours it isn't having the website it's updating it all the time.

#### **Pressure on sites**

One subject that came up was pressure on sites from increasing numbers of visitors. The health agenda is promoting green space access and it is apparent that this could

be a potential problem for community woodland groups with limited resources unless this is balanced by increased funding and recognition, and more volunteers.

The authors are aware of one group who have taken a decision not to publicise their site (including not having a website) to keep visitor numbers down and restrict users to the immediate local community.

#### **4.9 Regional variations**

As the groups attending the group sessions were obviously limited to those who were available and do not represent a truly random sample we are cautious about identifying themes and observations that might indicate differences between regions. We chose the three study regions as potentially representing differing social and economic environments and to some extent the discussions reflected this, but most of the major themes that emerged were common to all the regions.

In the South East CWG objectives were broadly around biodiversity and public access, whereas in the South West there was more focus on woodland produce. In a more rural area one might expect to see a deeper reservoir of people with countryside skills and general woodland awareness. The Delamere event in the North West was close to the urban areas around Manchester and Liverpool, and here there was more discussion of anti-social behaviour and other issues that might be expected to be a particular problem in larger urban centres.

Future support to CWGs needs to be focussed on meeting the requirements of the individual groups rather than tailoring to where in the country then happen to be located. We found that those groups that happened to be located in areas covered by woodland initiatives were receiving a higher level of valued support than those outside such areas.

### **5. Discussion**

This study has revealed a diverse range of groups, keen and enthusiastic about delivering their objectives but with serious concerns about their sustainability. A very common fear was about the lack of volunteers, aging profile of group members and low level of understanding about woodland management in general and their activities in particular potentially impacting on the longer term viability of groups.

This study confirms the observations from our previous study (Pollard and Tidey 2009) that groups have little contact with each other. This was seen in several contexts – the feeling of isolation and loneliness noted by some groups, the value of training courses for their networking potential and the enthusiasm with which attending members exchanged ideas and experiences with others at the events.

In the authors' experiences groups are keen to learn about productive woodland management but don't have access to sources of advice. Our previous study (Pollard and Tidey 2009) found that most groups received support from local authorities, wildlife trusts, the Woodland Trust and BTCV, all of whom would be looking at the woodland from a biodiversity/amenity point of view rather than the Forestry Commission who would be able to provide advice on economic management.

It was very clear that the woodland initiative and community forest operating in two of our study areas (Oxfordshire Woodland Project in that area of the South East and Mersey Forest in the North West) have provided vital support, training and access to funding for the groups. In the South West groups regretted the recent demise of South West Forest, which had provided similar support in that region.

Groups in general all experienced problems that originated from the lack of understanding of local people of what they are trying to do. There are two considerations here – one resulting from purely local perceptions (such as not understanding why rhododendron removal is beneficial to woodlands) and the other from messages that imply that felling trees and other management is bad. Messages that local people absorb from non-local sources conceivably have more impact than local awareness raising now that managed woodlands are outside most people's experience. Visits to a publically accessible woodland where management doesn't happen leaves an impression that this is the 'correct' way to manage woodlands 'sustainably', which is reinforced by popular messages about deforestation in the tropical rainforest.

Community woodlands have an important role to play here as woodlands are often the only semi-natural areas available over large areas of the country, and by visiting and getting involved local people can get an insight into the natural world.

The discussions showed that groups obtain a wide range of training from a range of sources. Of particular value is 'internal' training – the passing on of pre-existing skills from professional foresters and others within groups, transfer of expertise from individuals who have attended courses and particular skills from enthusiasts within groups (for example a keen birdwatcher teaching other members bird recognition). Cross membership with other local groups, such as the badger group or a butterfly group opens up further opportunities for informal training.

Many groups also access training provided by other organisations, some of which is essential (such as chainsaw or first aid training), some to facilitate administration and required organisational processes (e.g. health and safety) and some to provide additional skills for the group (e.g. hurdle making, coppicing).

In two cases groups had attended courses run by other community woodland groups. This is an area that it would be beneficial to encourage as it:

- would facilitate networking,

- could take place in community woodlands,
- be appropriate in level and content,
- reduce costs,
- enable capable, experienced groups to pass on skills.

Lack of knowledge inhibits contact with professionals and credibility with site owners. For groups to act as trusted partners and decision makers (to move from 'guided assistance' towards 'active responsible' – see section 6) on sites owned by other they need an appropriately high level of skills and knowledge. In some cases where groups were operating on sites owned by others they felt they were suffering from a lack of recognition in what they could and had achieved.

With the exceptions of the woodland initiatives and community forest mentioned, support from other organisations was very patchy. It was felt that support was very inconsistent, unreliable, often not appropriate and restricted. Some of the participants in the discussion groups had a poor opinion of the Forestry Commission, but as many groups had little contact this might be perceived/received than a real opinion based on experience, or result from a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of its role. As noted above, unrealistic expectations also appear to have coloured participant's opinions of other organisations. Although the Forestry Commission's remit does not currently include advice provision to everyone (although officers in general in the authors experience are flexible and helpful) we would suggest that, subject to staffing and budgetary constraints, the FC could have a useful role here supporting CWGs.

CWGs' Objectives broadly fell into four categories-

- Biodiversity,
- Education/awareness raising,
- Amenity/recreation,
- Produce,

with an overarching protecting/restoring 'guardian' role which groups explained as preserving the woodland and restoring it as traditional woodland.

All groups mentioned the first three as objectives (although their priority varied) but produce was mentioned by a smaller number. This research confirms the findings of the authors in their previous study (Pollard and Tidey 2009) showing that most groups get advice and support from wildlife trusts, local authorities, BTCV and the Woodland Trust whose objectives and areas of expertise focus on wildlife and amenity, rather than the Forestry Commission which could provide information on more active management. Some groups were actively against management, perhaps not fully understanding benefits of management for biodiversity. Some have deliberately placed artificial/moral limitations on their actions, such as not cutting down trees or not using herbicides.

Most groups are involved in biodiversity enhancement activities; some are group defined and led, others working with other groups. These activities often follow the

particular interests of members and provide an opportunity to engage the local community and motivate groups.

Concern over public funding is stimulating more interest in generating income which is more important for the more autonomous CWGs that may own their own woodland or have a formal leasing or management agreement over another institutions woodland (as in groups 3 and 4 discussed below) since they have greater responsibilities. Often groups don't know how to generate a small income from their woodland. However, others do and it would be beneficial if that knowledge could be shared with other groups. Groups are happy to consider other activities/objectives but often the limitations are time, lack of volunteers and knowledge.

All groups are interested in education/awareness raising and while some are involved in formal forest school and similar activities, capacity/knowledge and red tape is an issue, as is, for some, the reluctance of schools to accept responsibility for visits.

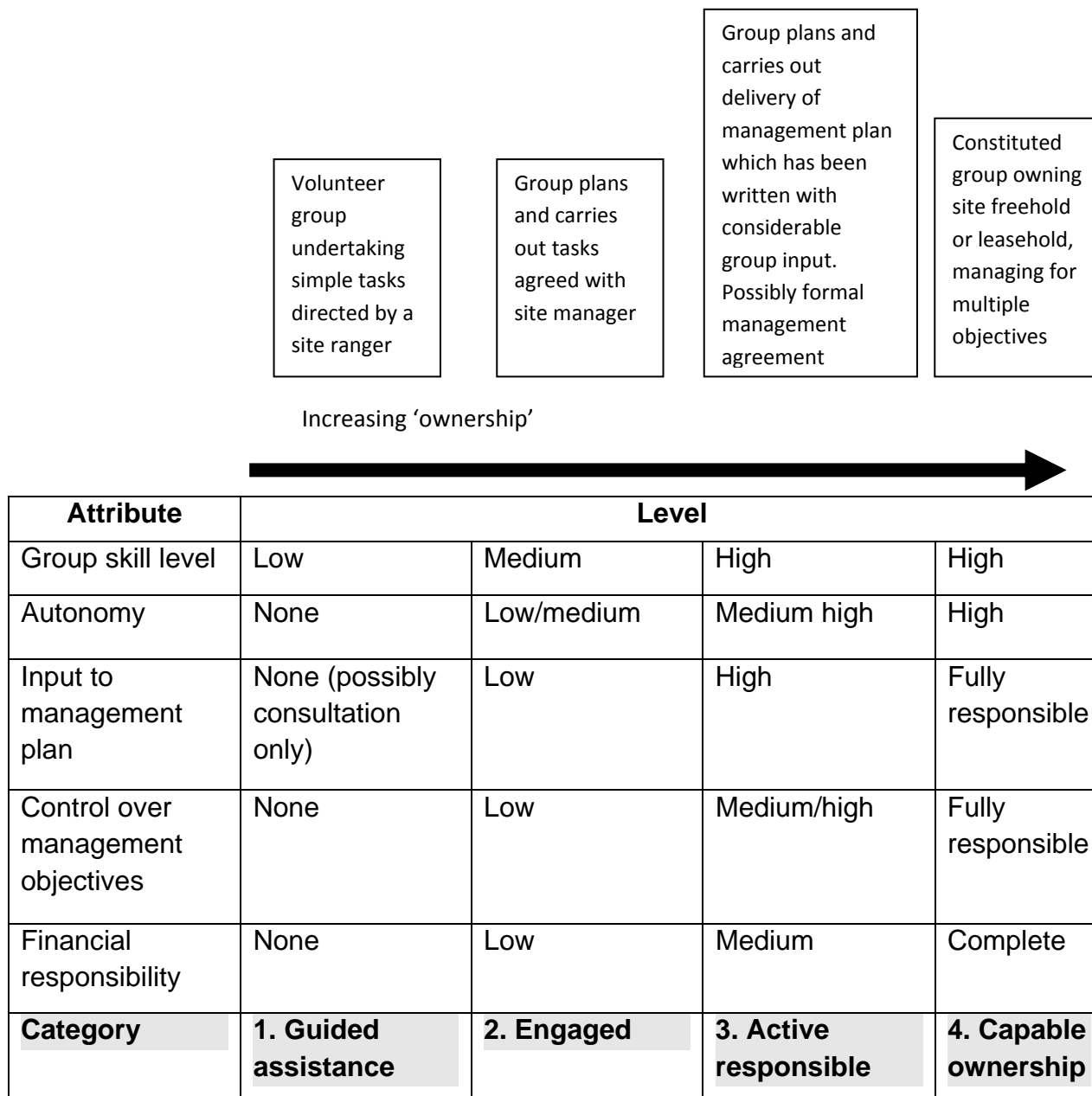
Most groups are confident about their ability to generate a basic income to pay for a few tools, insurance and other essentials for basic income but often prevented from more areas by lack of funding. There is a good range of knowledge/experience of funding sources across range of groups but very variable from group to group.

The skills need of groups depends on two factors; their management objectives and the type of CWG they are in terms of autonomy and responsibility (see the characterisation below). Some groups work regularly with rangers and others who provide expertise, while others have professionals in their group. Some commented that it is difficult to find expertise/advice that's appropriate for their smaller scale and mixed objectives.

Most groups are aware of the need to get information out about their activities (variable methods and frequency), but there is generally little evidence of gathering of feedback, opportunities for comment and means for community to influence activities. Groups can only benefit from engaging their local communities in decision making and it would reduce the incidence of conflict between group objectives and community perceptions.

## **6. Group characterisation**

Each participating group completed a baseline group profile form (Appendix 2). Using these responses together with the issues raised during the group discussions and informal contact with other groups including as part of our previous study the authors have constructed a model categorising groups according to the degree of ownership of 'their' woodland (see Figure 2 below).



**Figure 2. Types and attributes of community woodland groups**

(The groups included in this study would fall within categories 2 to 4 above).

### 6.1 Category characteristics

**Guided assistance:** At one end of the scale we have placed groups which act entirely on the direction of professional staff, usually but not exclusively from the landowner which might be from a local authority or other organisation such as a wildlife trust. Groups in this category would have no input into planning work, preparing a management plan or funding. Groups in this category were excluded from this study.

**Engaged:** Groups in this category carry out tasks agreed with the site owner/manager without regular supervision and would normally be trusted to deliver tasks listed in the site management plan with little professional input. They would normally have some formal type of group structure with regular meetings, a bank account and a small annual budget. They might have some input to the site management plan which would be written by professional staff.

**Active responsible:** In this category groups would have a more responsible role in planning work on the site, have the major role in preparing the site management plan and responsibility for implementing the plan. The group might have a formal management agreement for the site. The group would have some financial responsibility for fundraising to meet their revenue needs and for training/tool purchase etc, as well as for funding for specific projects.

**Capable ownership:** Groups in this category would generally own the freehold or leasehold of the woodland and would be responsible for all aspects of its management as well as financing maintenance, insurance and other regular costs. The group would prepare and deliver their management plan. Groups in this category will also have some form of formal constitutional structure, such as a registered charity or a limited company, which is an almost inevitable consequence of the increased responsibilities of site ownership.

## 6.2 Support needs

We have attempted using information obtained as part of this study to look at group support needs related to their category. It is important to note that this should not be viewed as definitive. A group in the 'Capable ownership' category, for example, might be very competently managing their woodland for amenity objectives but would welcome and benefit from advice and training to help them generate a small income from their woodland, or appreciate fundraising advice for a specific project.

**Guided assistance:** Groups in this category generally would be involved in simple management tasks such as path clearance or coppicing under the direction of a ranger or similar professional. Task specific training would be delivered by the ranger and more involved practical training could be made available to motivated individuals. Tools, insurance and other costs would be met by the 'sponsoring' organisation.

**Engaged:** In order to gain sufficient credibility with the site owner/manager groups in this category would have members who have reasonable skill and knowledge levels. Training, tool purchase, insurance and other costs might be partly met by the site owners but the group would need to fundraise for some costs. More formal training would enable additional tasks to be undertaken. These groups would have some form of formal structure and might be in need of support to ensure that this meets their



needs. These groups would have a limited amount of input into the management plan and additional training in woodland/habitat management would enable them to be more engaged.

**Active responsible:** Groups in this position would have at least a core of experienced individuals with a good level of practical knowledge. They would be trusted to deliver the site management plan (to which they would have made a considerable contribution) with little input from the owner. The group would have a range of tools and equipment, and potentially have individuals trained in chainsaw and other machinery use. The group would have a significant annual budget to meet insurance, training costs, renewals and tool replacements and might appreciate fundraising assistance. Groups in this position would often benefit from advice on community consultation and engagement.

**Capable ownership:** These groups have the considerable financial and practical responsibility of managing all aspects of their woodland. They would write and deliver their management plans and in many cases their groups include foresters, solicitors and other professionals who provide appropriate input. In all cases groups in this category have a formal structure such as a registered charity, or a limited company to reduce director responsibility. In many cases their constitutions provide for representation from relevant outside bodies. These groups would often benefit from advice to ensure adequate community consultation and representation.

These groups would usually have a sizeable annual budget often met through memberships, bequests or other income. Capital costs can be met though fundraising but revenue costs can be more difficult. Groups might benefit from advice about maximising the income from their woodland, and how expanding objectives would help them engage with and meet the needs of their local community. As landowners these groups would have responsibilities beyond those of the other categories – dealing with fly tipping, or regular tree inspections for example, and would need to budget for these costs and have sufficient reserves to meet these contingencies.

This categorisation should not be seen as definitive or as a pathway where groups move from Guided Assistance to Capable Ownership. Groups have to be comfortable with their level of responsibility. Group support needs will vary according to their ownership of 'their' woodland, but also depend on group make up, objectives, location, structure, financial responsibility, stocking and engagement with their local community.

## 7. Recommendations

1. A 'one stop shop' website or other source of information on the process of setting up and running a community woodland group was an interesting idea raised in one session. Some information is already available through the Small Woods Association, the Woodland Initiatives Handbook, the Woodland Trust's Community Woodlands Network, the BTCV and others but there is scope for an information source focussed on this sector.
2. The recent establishment of Llais y Goedwig could provide a 'bottom-up' model for a (perhaps regionally based) support and networking organisation in England, which could provide networking opportunities, funding advice and joint bids, training exchange between groups, facilitating woodland management advice, sharing experiences, 'avoiding reinvention of wheels' and representation to regional and national bodies. Seed funding for such an organisation could provide intelligent facilitation for groups – key support and interventions at critical times.
3. Where groups have a major role in the management of a woodland, whether the woodland is owned by the group or not, the Forestry Commission should consider directing ring fenced England Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) funds to groups to pay for some essential costs identified in this study, such as insurance and basic operating costs, and for woodland improvements.
4. More research is needed into regional differences; for example do groups in rural areas, especially in the west and north, reflect the rural development priorities and objectives seen in Wales and Scotland?
5. There would be value in measuring the benefits brought to community and public woodlands by the voluntary activities of community woodland groups. This would provide a means of assessing the impact of investment in community woodland groups.
6. The Forestry Commission could be more pro-active in engaging with CWGs. The perception of their role and usefulness is not high among some of the groups we spoke to, and their support and advice would help groups understand and manage their woodlands in a more rounded way by ensuring they consider objectives beyond the biodiversity/amenity agenda. The Forestry Commission has particular expertise in the commercial and economic production of timber and woodland management. There is a demonstrable need amongst CWGs for advice on how best to use their woodlands as a potential source of income to ensure sustainability.
7. CWGs are helping to deliver important aspects of the England's Trees Woods and Forests strategy, and this should be recognised by the Forestry Commission. Support for networking and activities which help CWGs to improve their own management practices and delivery of a wide range of

benefits from woodlands through mutual learning and resource sharing would be one way of doing this.

8. Groups do not require substantial funds or support to underpin their activities. Small inputs of funding and/or advice by public agencies at strategic times would have a great impact. Most groups are keen, enthusiastic and very self reliant but at key times in their development they would welcome access to a well signposted source or sources of advice.
9. Many groups have concerns about their future sustainability. Groups should be supported as part of future self reliant communities to help them engage with their local communities. Local authorities and local voluntary councils are well placed to provide such support.

## 8. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the group participants who willingly gave their time to contribute to some lively and fascinating discussions, and also those individuals from organisations who helped us gather information about community woodland groups across England.

We would also like to thank Forest Research for funding the study.

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## **Appendices**

### **1 List of participating groups**

#### **Delamere (North West)**

Friends of Witch Wood, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire  
Friends of Owley Wood, Northwich, Cheshire  
Friends of Anderton and Marbury, Northwich, Cheshire,  
Sadlers Wells Community Woodland, Cheshire  
Friends of Woolton Woods, Woolton, Merseyside

#### **Didcot (South East)**

Oakley Woodlands Group, Basingstoke  
Friends of Omer's Gully Wood, Reading  
Friends of Wychwood  
Old Down and Beggarwood Wildlife Group  
Friends of Clayfield Copse, Reading  
Friends of Oakley Park

#### **Tiverton (South West)**

Steward Community Woodland  
Keiran's Community Wood  
Friends of South Molton Community Woodland  
Wedmore Green Group

## 2 Baseline group data.

### Didcot (South East)

Name of Group	Econet (representative from Clayfield Copse)
Location	Reading, Berkshire
Region	South East
Year formed	Approx 2005
Motivation	An amalgamation of a mid week 'roving' group and previous Friends groups from various sites throughout the town.  To promote practical conservation through volunteers for the benefit of the natural environment and people of Reading area.  To educate the volunteers in the principles and practice of conservation.  The group undertakes work for a number of local councils, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire, Earley Town etc. as well as schools and other organisations (see 'Woodland – size' below).
Tenure	Management agreement. Local Authority owned woodlands. There are restrictions on any tree felling.
Support - establishment	Non specified
Support - ongoing	Yes – see Support Networks below.
Support - networks	Members of BTCV and maintain links with a number of local groups such as the 'Friends of' and RUWG (Reading Urban Wildlife Group).
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	The group will undertake practical conservation work.  Other activities, in furtherance of the aims or for the benefit of the group, shall be undertaken from time to time as the members see fit.  Money shall be raised when necessary for carrying out the aims of the group.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	60. Two officers.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban/Urban fringe
Woodland - size	Clayfield Copse 26.1 ha (64.5 acres), McIlroys 9.6 ha (23.7 acres), Lousehill 10.4 ha (25.8 acres), The Cowsey 15 ha

Woodland - stocking	(37.3 acres), Mapledurham Playing Fields 1.6 ha (4 acres). Mixed regenerating, ancient and plantation.
Engagement with wider community	Events such as walks, planting with local schools and Brownies.
Definition of community	No definition specified (respondent noted – “No surveys done”).
Management	The group is involved with the management plans and practical tasks agreed with the organisation. Different sites have different plans.
In EWGS?	No

Name of Group	Friends of Oakley Park
Location	Fleet
Region	South East
Year formed	1989
Motivation	Residents felt that the park and woodland were being neglected by the local council.
Tenure	Owned by Local District council – will be transferred to newly forming Parish Council. The group has a loose arrangement where they do things under advice of the local council Ranger service who have a management plan. The group have written some restrictions into their constitution recently as they felt that the very loose informal basis they were doing things under previously could have unintended consequences.
Support - establishment	Hart District Council
Support - ongoing	Yes – but there is uncertainty over future support because of the transfer of ownership to a new Parish Council.
Support - networks	Hart Voluntary Action
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	To help maintain and improve both the park and the woodland. To provide activities, both educational and fun for the community.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	200 members. 6 committee members. Members fee £4 family/£2 individual.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban
Woodland - size	1.2 ha (3 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Mixed deciduous. Some Scots pine. Some wet woodland trees such as Alder and Willow
Engagement with wider community	Regular volunteer sessions. Run activities such as bat walks, pond dipping, easter egg hunts.
Definition of community	Home owners, retired, affluent, families.
Management	Hart District Council Ranger service currently plans it and the group carry it out in conjunction with them. When the handover to a Parish Council occurs the group are unsure of who will carry out the management alongside them as the Parish will have to buy in contractors to do the work.
In EWGS?	No

Name of Group	The Friends of Omers Gully
Location	Reading
Region	South East
Year formed	2003
Motivation	To clean up and make accessible a neglected woodland so that it was a safe place for the community to use.
Tenure	Englefield Estate (80%) and West Berkshire Council (20%)
Support - establishment	BTCV
Support - ongoing	Sovereign Housing Association, West Berkshire Council
Support - networks	Use the housing association and council name above.
Perception of support	Very good
Aims and activities	Practical conservation through volunteers for the benefit of wildlife and the public.
	To educate the volunteers in the principles and practices of conservation.
	To involve the community, including school children.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	8 voting members (officers), 50-100 Friends of.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban fringe
Woodland - size	3.6 ha (8.9 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Broad leaved. Oak, ash, birch, alder, field maple, holly, willow.
Engagement with wider community	10% of local residents are involved in the group as committee members, litter picks, improving access. Engagement with the wider community through attending local fairs etc to promote the woodland.
Definition of community	Low income housing association
Management	Where safe to do so the group carries out management, otherwise it is the Local Authority. The objectives are to keep the woods safe for the public, promote wildlife, preserve/maintain the woodland. Part of the woodland has recently been coppiced by Englefield Estate.
In EWGS?	No



Name of Group	Oakley Woodlands Group
Location	Basingstoke
Region	South East
Year formed	1997
Motivation	An initiative by the Borough Council to encourage local involvement in managing what were to become Community Woodlands.
Tenure	The woods are leased to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. The group work to a management plan provided by the council, which is updated regularly in agreement with the council.
Support - establishment	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Support - ongoing	Yes
Support - networks	A local network of Conservation Groups sponsored by the council.
Perception of support	Very good.
Aims and activities	<p>To restore and maintain the activities and traditions of woodland management, for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.</p> <p>To encourage local residents to become involved in the practical management of the Sites.</p> <p>To provide controlled access to the Sites for the local community.</p> <p>To encourage educational usage of the Sites by local people, schools and youth organisation.</p> <p>To carry out surveys to monitor the overall welfare of the sites for the benefit of fauna and flora.</p>
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	65 volunteers and friends. 4 officers. Membership fee £1
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban fringe
Woodland - size	9.1 ha (two copses)
Woodland - stocking	Hazel coppice with oak standards. Smaller numbers of other native species - ash, birch, hawthorn, holly, blackthorn, field maple, cherry.
Engagement with wider community	<p>About 1% of local residents are involved in the group as volunteers, customers or just interested parties.</p> <p>Engagement with the wider community is through Council website, articles in the local press, Newsletter to interested</p>

parties including Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (H&IOWT).

Definition of community	The village of Oakley has about 6000 residents of mixed income. Some volunteers come from elsewhere in the Borough
Management	The original Management Plan was prepared by the H&IOWT on behalf of The Council. The Group follows this plan and initiates changes as necessary. The Group carries out nearly all the practical work with occasional professional help. After coppicing the Group plants hazel whips in any sparse areas.
In EWGS?	No

Name of Group	Old Down & Beggarwood Wildlife Group
Location	Basingstoke
Region	South East
Year formed	2007
Motivation	To restore wildflowers on a public site on chalk to restore diversity and reconnect people with nature
Tenure	Owned by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Group has a management agreement but it has limitations, the Council retains oversight and final point of decision making over all of the Groups work but also responsibilities for Health & Safety issues with respect to tree management.
Support - establishment	Wildlife Trust, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Support - ongoing	Only on a request basis. Would like to receive advice in which we could have more confidence.
Support - networks	Basingstoke Conservation Network and Basingstoke Natural Environment Forum.
Perception of support	Good – but with a feeling there is better advice out there – but may be wrong.
Aims and activities	Restoration of flora and fauna rich habitats – within constraints of a public site, public education & public awareness of biodiversity issues, learning for those interested in the subject.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	Passive about 100 and active up to 15. All who register an interest are treated as members. Six officers.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban fringe
Woodland - size	Two areas : Old Down 9.7 ha (24 acres) and Beggarwood about 22.3 ha (55 acres). Currently the Borough has required the group to stay away from Beggarwood while they decide on public new facilities.
Woodland - stocking	Old Down – 2-3 ha of mature beech woodland, 4-5 ha of newly planted mixed woodland but mostly shrub species. Tree stock: beech, ash, holly, hazel.
Engagement with wider community	Less than 1% of local residents involved in group through practical conservation work and Committee. Engagement with wider community through Newsletter, notice boards, talks.
Definition of community	Surrounding suburbs
Management	So far the group has only dealt with young growing trees by thinning. Management objectives still unclear.
In EWGS?	No

Name of Group	Shipton Parish Volunteers
Location	Shipton Under Wychwood, Chipping Norton
Region	South East
Year formed	1999
Motivation	To work with the Woodland Trust to create a “Wood on our Doorstep” – Millennium Project.
Tenure	Woodland Trust own the woodland purchased through local pledges and fund raising activities - 50% of purchase price – plus ongoing management fund. There is no management agreement with the group. N.B. There is a possibility of a fledgling local group taking a lease. At present this group is aiming to acquire another site in the village.
Support - establishment	Woodland Trust, West Oxfordshire District Council, local Woodland Initiative.
Support - ongoing	No
Support - networks	Wychwood Project, Oxfordshire Woodland Project.
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	To support our community wood and enhance our local environment.
Legal structure	None – informal group. No constitution.
Membership	40 members/volunteers.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	2.5 ha (6.25 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Native deciduous typical of Wychwood Forest.
Engagement with wider community	About 5% of local residents involved in group. Using the woodland and helping to maintain it. The group engages with the wider community through other volunteering activities in the village.
Definition of community	Home owners, retired, affluent.
Management	The Woodland Trust employs a contractor, the group carries out pruning etc. The objectives are to manage the woodland for amenity, wildlife and timber.
In EWGS?	Unknown

Name of Group	Witney Woodland Volunteers
Location	Witney, Oxon
Region	South East
Year formed	2006
Motivation	Encouraged by West Oxfordshire District Council to improve the natural environment in Witney by clearing, planting, maintaining footpaths, meadows and riverbanks for local community to enjoy and to establish new areas of woodland.
Tenure	Owned by the local authority. The group is about to sign a management agreement. There are certain restrictions imposed by West Oxfordshire District Council consistent with the location, on the edge of an urban area.
Support - establishment	West Oxfordshire District Council own and identified the piece of land as suitable. Other support from Wychwood Project contacts and solicitors.
Support - ongoing	Yes – if requested.
Support - networks	Affiliated with the Wychwood Project.
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	To improve the natural environment in Witney.  Establish new areas of woodland.  Encourage community/school participation.
Legal structure	Unincorporated Association (non charitable)
Membership	45 voting members. 8 committee members. Membership fee £5 per year.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban/urban fringe – small town population of 23,000 and fringes of the town.
Woodland - size	1.6 ha (4 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Not yet planted. (although respondent subsequently described using professionals for mature tree pollarding)
Engagement with wider community	1% of local residents involved in the group as volunteers and for planting days. Engagement with the wider community through community work parties, press publicity
Definition of community	Mixed
Management	The membership currently carries out activities and they use professionals for mature tree pollarding. The proposed management plan is coppice wood and for community enjoyment/advanced biodiversity.
In EWGS?	No

## **Delamere (North west)**

Name of Group	Friends of Owley Wood
Location	Northwich, Cheshire
Region	North West
Year formed	1993
Motivation	Rescuing the wood from dereliction and vandalism.
Tenure	Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) are the owners. The group work in accordance with a Management Plan. The current arrangement is rather informal at present in terms of what they may or may not do. Any taking out of trees is referred to CWT.
Support - establishment	Vale Royal Borough Council (Now known as Cheshire West and Chester Council)
Support - ongoing Support - networks	Not from Vale Royal Borough Council Mersey Forest – (Community Contracting Initiative)
Perception of support Aims and activities	Very good. Woodland Maintenance for the benefit of the local community and in accordance with the management plan.
Legal structure	Voluntary Group
Membership	Friends of – 12. Committee members 7.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	6.27 ha (15.5 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Mainly dominated by sycamore and oak, with ash, sweet chestnut, birch and wych elm also largely present. Sweet chestnut forms large structural features within the woodland. Sycamore is having a detrimental effect on the ground flora and is largely dominating the regeneration found within the woodland. A high diversity of shrub species; rowan, alder, elder, blackthorn, dogwood, guelder rose, hawthorn, hazel, holly, field maple, privet, throughout.
Engagement with wider community	100% of local residents involved in the group. Group news is published in the quarterly magazine delivered free to every household in the village.
Definition of community	Village of Weaverham (pop c6000). Affluence slightly below national average, age is slightly above.
Management	Woodland management is planned and carried out by the group, including the use of chainsaws for removing fallen trees. However, if a tree needs to be felled for safety or

whatever other reason the operation is carried out by professionals employed by the owner (CWT).

In EWGS?

Yes – first payment recently received.

Name of Group	Sadlers Wells Community Woodland
Location	Bunbury, Cheshire
Region	North West
Year formed	1997
Motivation	To save the semi natural ancient woodland from being clear felled.
Tenure	Owners of the woodland through a restricted purchase. Money for the purchase was raised through subscription, donation, and Lottery funding.
Support - establishment	Cheshire Landscape Trust
Support - ongoing	No
Support - networks	No
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	To protect and enlarge the woodland.
Legal structure	Charity
Membership	Trustees – 7. Friends of – 79. Membership fee for Friends £5 p.a.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	2.2 ha (5.5 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Not defined. 1000 trees.
Engagement with wider community	Engagement through school, conducted tours and noticeboards. 10% of local residents use the facility, including working parties, public meetings.
Definition of community	Home owners.
Management	Management planned and carried out by the Trustees of which there are professionally qualified members. There is an agreed management plan which includes maintaining and improving the environmental quality of the wood.
In EWGS?	Yes – for part purchase and planting of trees.



Name of Group	Witch Wood (Lytham St. Annes Civic Society)
Location	Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire
Region	North West
Year formed	Civic Society 1960, acquired woodland 1974.
Motivation	A housing estate was developed alongside the woodland. The local council did not wish to take responsibility for the wood and it was gifted to the Civic Society for development as a woodland walk for the benefit of the local community.
Tenure	The group is part owned by the Civic Society and part owned by Network Rail. The public are allowed to use the woodland walks. The Civic Society has to maintain the land in good and tenantable repair and condition. The other restrictions are standard Network Rail tenancy wordings.
Support - establishment	Fylde Borough Council and solicitors.
Support - ongoing	Forestry Commission, Lancashire County Council Green Partnership Scheme, LCC Locals Climate Change Scheme, Fylde Borough Council Tree Officer. Have had support in the past from Myerscough College.
Support - networks	No
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	To preserve the woodland for the local community and to maintain a woodland walk. To cut back invasive sycamore and elm and replace by indigenous English species such as oak, beech, ash, horse chestnut, birch and rowan. To support biodiversity.
Legal structure	Charity
Membership	The Civic Society has 430 members. Voting members at AGM only. Committee Members – 9, Officer – 4. Membership of the Society if £6 for individuals and £10 for families.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban
Woodland - size	4 ha (9.8 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Mixed broadleaves. Much sycamore but mainly oak and beech plus ash, alder, lime, horse chestnut, rowan, birch and other varieties.
Engagement with wider community	There are up to 10 Witch Wood volunteers working one day a week throughout the year. The local community use the wood as a walk between Ansdell and Lytham. Extensive dog walking. Some felled timber is sold to the local community for firewood. The Civic Society produces a quarterly newsletter which includes Witch

Wood articles, there is also a Civic Society website with a section for Witch Wood.

Definition of  
community  
Management

Very varied

The main committee of the Society delegates to a Witch Wood sub-committee. The sub-committee meets to discuss and agree the plans and Witch Wood volunteers (most of which are on the sub-committee) carry out the management as directed by the sub-committee. A tree surgeon is used for high, difficult or dangerous tree work. The group has a tree nursery to bring on whips, some of which are received from the Woodland Trust. The group also support a natural regeneration process.

In EWGS?

Yes and has been over the years although they don't currently have a grant but will be applying shortly for a new grant. The grant has paid for removal of sycamore and replacement by indigenous species.

Name of Group	Woolton Village Residents Association (including Friends of Woolton Woods)
Location	Woolton Village, Liverpool
Region	North West
Year formed	1981
Motivation	Community representation and improving conservation of built and natural environment.
Tenure	Owned by Liverpool City Council. The group is part of the team which drew up and updates the management plan. Because of the groups involvement in the management plan, restrictions do not arise.
Support - establishment	Liverpool City Council, Mersey Forest – (Community Contracting Initiative)
Support - ongoing	Yes
Support - networks	Mersey Forest CCI, BTCV, all local groups, Council Rangers Service, LCVS environmental network, Liverpool Parks Friends Forum.
Perception of support	Very good.
Aims and activities	Community representation and improving conservation of built and natural environment
Legal structure	Not for Profit Organisation (Non charitable Residents Assn)
Membership	380. Friends of (numbers vary by season – 30 to 36. Committee Members – 24. Officers 7. Membership fee charged £2 retired/non-working, £4 working.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Urban fringe
Woodland - size	Whole site is 33.1 ha (82 acres) – woodland is just less than half.
Woodland - stocking	Mature Beech and Oak woodland, with some Pine, Holly, Apple, Blackberry, Yew, and Sycamore. Rhododendron has been significantly reduced since the group became part of the management team.
Engagement with wider community	The group is the wider Community – a Residents Association which has branched out into greenspace work. The Community has an interest in protecting the community and the environment. Majority of core group are local people and they are involved in every way from administration and fundraising to practical work on site.
Definition of community	All social and financial backgrounds.

Management	Woodland management is planned and carried out by Friends of Woolton Woods & Camp Hill, Woolton Village Residents Assn, Liverpool City Council, Glendale Liverpool contractors. The key objective is to ensure sustainability of the mainly mature woodland by underplanting and new area of sapling planting. Creating a wider tree age spectrum to ensure the mature woodland does not die off all at one time, without there being new stock to replace species coming to the end of their life. Encouraging wildflower species to establish themselves as food sources for a variety of insect life, thus promoting increased site biodiversity.
In EWGS?	No – but part of the Mersey Forest CCI project for the cultivation of new woodland areas.

Name of Group	Friends of Anderton and Marbury
Location	Northwich, Cheshire
Region	North West
Year formed	1999
Motivation	" A clear oversight and review of what is being done on site at Marbury and Anderton" and "To support local management in their endeavours"
Tenure	Site owner by local authority and a private owner
Support - establishment	Yes
Support - ongoing	Groundwork, Mersey Forest, Northwich Woodlands
Support - networks	
Perception of support	Very good.
Aims and activities	To help and support the rangers in keeping our local woodlands and nature park accessible to all. Contributing funds in way of environmental beneficial schemes.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	160, £10 annual fee
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	400 acres
Woodland - stocking	Ancient woodland to recent secondary, all BL
Engagement with wider community	
Definition of community	.Rural, small villages
Management	
In EWGS?	No

## Tiverton (South West)

Name of Group	Friends of South Molton Community Woodland
Location	South Molton, Devon
Region	South West
Year formed	2004
Motivation	Need for usable green public space in South Molton.
Tenure	Woodland owned by Town Council. The group has a management agreement and works with the council and the land agent.
Support - establishment	Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trust, South Molton Town Council, North Devon Council. South West Forest was biggest help.
Support - ongoing	Yes. (South West Forest has since closed but was a good source of help).
Support - networks	BTCV, Woodland Trust
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	Environmental education and social inclusion. Raising financial support from the Town Council, selling beanpoles and refreshments at events.
Legal structure	Voluntary Organisation
Membership	100 members. All voting members. Committee of 12. Membership fee of £3 p.a. (£5 for families).
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	8.9 ha (22 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Oak, beech, ash, alder, hazel coppice, cider apple orchard, rosa, spindle, rowan. (Silvanus native wood planting 1992).
Engagement with wider community	The group engages with the community by joining in other events and also by organising events e.g. carnival, barn dances, picnics. The community use the woodland for recreation and a small number help with work parties, fundraising and administration.
Definition of community	Old market town with new business estate. Broad mix of socio-economic groups
Management	The group makes decisions and use specialist labour. Management objectives are different for each part of the woodland but general biodiversity encouraged.
In EWGS?	Yes – The grant funded initial management plan and stakeholder consultation.

Name of Group	Kieran's Community Wood
Location	Buckfastleigh, Devon
Region	South West
Year formed	2004
Motivation	A cheap piece of land became available. The group were already involved in sustainable ecological land management.
Tenure	Private owner who is part of the group and is the landlord.
Support - establishment	Woodland Trust Community Woodland Network
Support - ongoing	Only a small amount.
Support - networks	Small Woods Association
Perception of support	Good but small
Aims and activities	Sustainable ecological land management. Transition Town Initiative. Raising funds through the sale of woodland products, woodfuel, stone from the site, electricity wayleave, education, small grants – including Entry Level Stewardship, Woodland Trust Community Woodland, District Council.
Legal structure	Unincorporated Association
Membership	Seven members. Owner part of group and landlord.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	2.8 ha (7 acres) + new land of 8 ha (20 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Many native trees including three acres of ancient woodland.
Engagement with wider community	School groups, visits, activities days, education nights,
Definition of community	Not specified
Management	The group has a woodland manager. The objective is for sustainable and ecological woodland management, continuous cover and to clear an area for orchards.
In EWGS?	No

Name of Group	Steward Community Woodland (Affinity Woodland Worker's Co-operative)
Location	Mortonhampstead, Devon
Region	South West
Year formed	1999
Motivation	The articles of association state that the group will encourage ecologically sensitive practices and principles; and that decisions will be based on consensus decision making. The group was founded to demonstrate a different way of living, everyone involved had been campaigning against negative issues for a long time.
Tenure	Owned by the group, purchased on the open market.
Support - establishment	None identified, but land purchased using interest free Loan Stock.
Support - ongoing	None
Support - networks	Permaculture Assn and local informal network of friends and community
Perception of support	Very good at a local level
Aims and activities	To demonstrate low-impact lifestyle and functioning community To disseminate information; public education. To engage with and enable individuals to learn practical and social skills; To empower individuals to be able to make their own, informed, choices. To act as an educational venue and host visits and volunteers.
Legal structure	Not-for-profit limited company
Membership	Eleven members – they all sit on the board
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	12.9 ha (32 acres)
Woodland - stocking	Overstorey of mature plantation conifer (larch, scots, spruce) and some mature sycamore and ash; understorey of hazel, sycamore, ash, oak
Engagement with wider community	Inviting groups for visits, woodland walks, volunteering; holding an annual Open Day; becoming involved in other events outside the wood – the group is part of the life of local community.
Definition of community	Lower than average income but not at all deprived; high percentage of retired people.
Management	All members of the group help to plan and carry out management. Group has never needed to bring other foresters in. They do use volunteers to help. The management plan is : No/low impact on wildlife, increasing the biodiversity of the woodland, sustainable production of timber for wood products



and timber, re-planting with broadleaves at a rate that does not adversely affect the fauna using the conifers as habitat. Constant cover principles as reference. Works carried out on a small scale.

In EWGS?

In the past for re-stocking with broadleaves

Name of Group	Wedmore Green Group
Location	Wedmore, Somerset
Region	South West
Year formed	2006
Motivation	To help the groups members, and to encourage others, to lead more sustainable lifestyles while reducing carbon emissions.
Tenure	Woodland owned by Wedmore Parish Council. The site was donated by one of the group's members; the group did not want to own the woodland as they wanted it to be community-owned, and the parish council agreed to take on ownership with the group managing it under an agreement with the Parish Council.
Support - establishment	Woodland Trust, Somerset County Council, Solicitors.
Support - ongoing	No
Support - networks	Woodland Trust's Community Woodland Network
Perception of support	Good
Aims and activities	<p>To maximise the woodland's potential as a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resource in combating climate change via carbon capture;</li> <li>• habitat for wildlife;</li> <li>• source of renewable fuel in the form of firewood;</li> <li>• community amenity.</li> </ul> <p>Raising funds through grants, in-kind donations (solicitors fees)</p>
Legal structure	Voluntary organisation
Membership	80 voting members. Four officers.
Urban/urban fringe/rural	Rural
Woodland - size	0.5 acres
Woodland - stocking	Native broadleaved (oak, small-leaved lime, field maple, hornbeam, spindle, rowan, etc)
Engagement with wider community	Most of the groups events & activities are open to and widely visited by the public, e.g. Green Fair, Freecycle Days, Big Tidy Ups, etc. In the civil parish of Wedmore, about 2-3% of local residents are involved in the group. They helped to plant the woodland and now help manage it.
Definition of community	Mixed rural community, with majority of home owners, some retired.
Management	The woodland management is planned and carried out by

two of the group's officers who initiated and manage the project. The group carries out the bulk of the woodland management, but has used professionals to lay hedges and also fell large trees.

In EWGS?

No

### **3 Discussion group programme**

#### **Community Woodlands in England**

##### **AGENDA :**

- 12.00           Arrival – registration and lunch. Need to give them 15 minutes to be late and to get themselves registered.
- 12.45           Get everyone to their tables – hopefully we can allocate tables before the event. Two tables, split up people from the same woodland group
- 12.45 Phil – Welcome, Setting the Scene – presentation
- 13.05           Forest Research – What does it do?
- 13.10           Objectives                   (15 mins to discuss)
- 13.25           Response and discussion : (10 mins)
- 13.35           Support                       (20 mins to discuss)
- 13.55           Response and discussion (10 mins)
- 14.05           Training                       (20 mins to discuss)
- 14.25           Response and discussion (15 mins)
- 14.40           Pick up Tea/Coffee – comfort break : (10 mins)
- 14.50           £10K windfall               (15 mins to discuss)
- 15.05           Response and discussion (10 mins)
- 15.15           Barriers (20 mins to discuss)
- 15.35           Discuss barriers feedback (10 mins)
- 15.45           Round up
- 16.15 Finish

#### 4 Group data collection – email

Dear colleague,

### **Establishing the Support Needs of Community Woodlands in England**

#### **An initial scoping study**

We have been commissioned by Forest Research, part of the Forestry Commission, to research the community woodland sector in England with the aim of learning more about structure, funding, tenure, management objectives and future support needs. As a first step we would like to enlarge our, at present incomplete, database to give as complete as possible picture of the size of the sector and to facilitate contact with groups. We propose to convene a number of focus groups across England in the spring bringing together a representative sample of group members to explore how they might best be supported in the future. This work is to follow on from our previous study available at

[http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/pdf/England\\_community\\_woodland\\_report\\_Oct\\_09.pdf/\\$FILE/England\\_community\\_woodland\\_report\\_Oct\\_09.pdf](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/pdf/England_community_woodland_report_Oct_09.pdf/$FILE/England_community_woodland_report_Oct_09.pdf)

As part of your role you will have had contact with groups in your area and I would be grateful if you were able to complete the attached form and return it to me by February 12<sup>th</sup>. You can be assured that all data will be treated with a high level of confidence and confidentiality, and shared within this organisation and Forest Research only.

*The term ‘community woodland group’ for our purposes is defined as ‘a community-led group which takes an active role in the management of a woodland which it might own or lease, or work in with the owner’s permission’.*

*This definition might include a ‘Friends of’ group which agrees an annual work programme with Forestry Commission or the Woodland Trust, but exclude a regular volunteer group organised and supervised by a ranger who sets tasks for each session.*

Small Woods is a UK wide charity with the aim of encouraging the sustainable management of our small woodlands for economic, biodiversity and social benefits.

Many thanks,  
Phil Tidey

## 5. Consent form

### Information for Participants and Consent Form

#### RECRUITMENT for COMMUNITY WOODLANDS STUDY

*If you have any complaints or questions about today's research, you can contact Phil Tidey or Angela Pollard on 01952 432769*

I understand that the discussion will be audio-taped ☐ YES ☐ NO

I understand that all the information gathered today will  
be stored in line with principles of the Data Protection Act 1998

and not made available to anyone outside Forest Research

and Small Woods ☐ YES ☐ NO

I understand that I can leave the session at any stage  
and I do not have to answer any/all the questions ☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to participate in the study ☐ YES ☐ NO

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name in block letters: .....

## 6. Introductory presentation

### Researching Community Woodlands in England

Phil Tidey  
Angela Pollard



### Objectives

- To map the extent of community woodland groups across England
- To explore community woodland group's objectives, how they function, aspirations and support needs



- Please complete the data collection form (if you haven't already done so) and leave it with us before you go – one per woodland group



### To set the scene.....



### Woodlands in England

- Total woodland area 1,119,000ha



Broadleaved 749,000ha



Conifers 370,000ha



### Woodland History

- Woodland clearance started in the neolithic period 5000 years ago
- Dropped to 15% by time of the Norman Conquest, and further to 5% by 1900
- Creation of the Forestry Commission in 1919 to develop a strategic resource stimulated a rise to 8.4%, with England's most wooded county, Surrey, having 22% cover



## Woodland History

This compares to

- 11.6% across the UK
- 27.9% in France
- 40% average in EU countries
- Sweden 60%
- Japan 70%



## Key Facts

- 75% of all woodlands are between 0.1 and 2ha
- 93% of timber and timber products used in England are imported
- Annual increment 7.1MT, Harvested at present 2.9MT, Unutilised 4.2MT (59%)



## Why value woodlands?

- Economic benefits – from planting, management, harvesting, processing, manufacture, also recreation and landscape
- Biodiversity
- Social/psychological – sense of place, calming
- Environmental – shade, screening,
- Carbon Balance



## Woodlands and Climate Change

- Woodfuel – carbon neutral



## Woodlands and Climate Change

- Product substitution



## Woodlands and Climate Change

- New woodlands – carbon sinks



Health warning –  
Carbon offset planting must be additional and include provision for future management





## Woodlands and Climate Change

- Shade, cooling, flood plain management

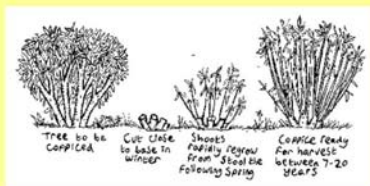


## Coppice produce/green wood crafts



## Options for management - Coppicing

- Cutting trees down to ground level at intervals to stimulate new growth
- 'Coupes' of 0.25-0.5ha
- Coppice with standards
- Biodiversity value – usually high



## Options for management- Clear fell

- Growing a crop of trees, thinning then felling them all at once, then replacing them with another crop
- Replacement by planting or natural regeneration
- Even age – all trees of same age
- Biodiversity value – usually low



## Options for management- Continuous cover

- Individual trees or small groups selectively felled
- Gaps filled by natural regeneration
- Uneven age – trees of all ages present
- Can convert even age woodlands into continuous cover over time
- Biodiversity value- usually medium/high



## Forest Research-

### What is it?



## In your groups.....



## Objectives

Discuss what your objectives are for your woodlands, and write down what are your three top objectives and why



## Support

Where would you go if you needed support in the following areas-

- Financial
- Fundraising
- Woodland management
- Health and safety
- Community engagement
- Conflicts

Discuss in your groups and list 2-3 sources for each,



## Training

Thinking about your activities in and around your woodland,

- What training have your woodland group members received in the past or are currently receiving, and who is providing it?
- Where do you think your woodland groups need more training and what type? (Think about doing what you are currently doing, and also how you might extend your activities)



If you had access to a £10,000 grant to improve your woodlands, or the capability of your woodland groups to manage your woodlands, what would you spend it on?



## Barriers

- What are the three biggest barriers to the smooth, enjoyable, productive and safe operation of your woodland groups?



**THANK YOU**



## 7. Research terms of reference

### Scope of Work

The objectives of this research contract are to build on the exploratory study and:

- Map more fully the extent of community woodland groups across England;
- Explore community woodland group's objectives, aspirations and support needs representative of different English regions;
- Produce a synthesis report which characterises the types of community woodland groups represented and the opportunities for developing support mechanisms for those groups which may or may not include the Forestry Commission.

The contract comprises the following main tasks:

(1) Produce a more complete picture of the extent of community woodland groups/community forestry in England through development of the community woodland database using contact with organisations, woodland initiatives, Forestry Commission and local authorities

(2) Organise three regional discussion groups in the north west, south west and south east (venues to be accessible by public transport, convenient location for pool of participants, within allocated budget), and confirm final choice of venue and dates with the Commission. Confirmation of dates and venue will allow FR staff to attend where appropriate.

(3) Recruit participants from 8-10 community groups to attend per discussion group. Recruitment of community groups in each location should look to cover a range of tenure, objectives, longevity, size, woodland type and partnership involvement.

(4) Professionally and effectively liaise with recruited participants to confirm and respond to any queries regarding the general topic of the discussion, location and timing of the meeting and motivate them to attend the meeting.

(5) At least five days prior to the discussion groups taking place provide The Commission with the information about the recruited participants for the discussion group (first name and surname, target group characteristics/profile). This information is need for the disbursement of travel expenses.

(6) Produce a synthesis research report which:

- Describes the consultation process and outcomes;
- Characterises the types of community woodland groups represented across the regions;
- Provides evidence-based conclusions about the evolution of community woodlands/forestry and the subsequent opportunities for developing support mechanisms for those different kinds of groups.

○

(7) Be available to present the results of the research to the Commission.

(8) Be available to consider and promptly respond to any queries by The Commission in connection with the work relating to this contract.

## 8 Community woodland group database

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Boston Woods Trust	East Midlands
Brickle Pocket Park Silverstone	East Midlands
Friends of Belper Parks	East Midlands
Friends of Bramcote Ridge	East Midlands
Friends of Brinsley Headstocks	East Midlands
Friends of Colliers Wood	East Midlands
Friends of Colwick Woods	East Midlands
Friends of Holly Hayes Woodland	East Midlands
Friends of Toton Fields	East Midlands
Friends of Willesley WT	East Midlands
Great Glen Community WildSpace Project	East Midlands
Manor Fields	East Midlands
Nettleham Woodland Trust	East Midlands
Stamford Community Orchard Group	East Midlands
The Stoney Wood Group	East Midlands
Upper Saxondale Residents Association	East Midlands
Acle Lands Trust	East of England
Barnby & North Cove Woodland Project	East of England
Barwoods-Botesdale and Rickingham Community Woodlands	East of England
Blackbourne Tree Group	East of England
Bradwell Community Woodland Project	East of England
Bramingham Wood Volunteers	East of England
Branchlines	East of England
Bridge Project Osier Beds	East of England
Broomfield Hospital Woodland Management Project Group	East of England
Broomfield Parish Council	East of England
Cherry Wood Community Woodland	East of England
Clare Nuttery	East of England
Cottenham Community Woodlands Group	East of England
CWIP (Community Woodland for Ipswich)	East of England
Dedham Enjoys Nature	East of England
Diss Community Woodland Project	East of England
Draituna Trees	East of England
Eden Rose Coppice	East of England
Elmsett Greenlife Grove Scheme	East of England
Elmswell Community Wood	East of England
Felixstowe Society	East of England
Fen Reeve Community Woodland	East of England



Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Forest for Our Children	East of England
Friends of Batchwood	East of England
Friends of Bocking Blackwater	East of England
Friends of Boughton Brake	East of England
Friends of Cockaynes Wood	East of England
Friends of Hanstead Wood	East of England
Friends of Haslingfield Church	East of England
Friends of Holybread Wood	East of England
Friends of Northaw Great Wood	East of England
Friends of Sadlers Wood	East of England
Friends of Stream Wood	East of England
Friends of the Willows	East of England
Friends of Thetford Forest Park	East of England
Galleywood Parish Council	East of England
Go Wild in Newmarket	East of England
Gobions Woodland Trust	East of England
Grafham Wildlife and Conservation Group	East of England
Great Barton Woodlands	East of England
Growing In St. Johns	East of England
Gunton Woodland Community Project	East of England
Hedingham Riverside Walk	East of England
Holbrook Comm.Woodland	East of England
Huntington Conservation Volunteers	East of England
Kedington Community Association	East of England
Kenninghall Lands Trust	East of England
Lavenham Woodland Project	East of England
Little Downham Conservation Volunteers	East of England
Long's Wood	East of England
Lostock and Chew Moor Conservation Group	East of England
Marnham Woodlands	East of England
Martlesham Heath Householders Ltd	East of England
Mayland Community Woodland Group	East of England
Melwood Conservation Group	East of England
New Reeding Wood	East of England
New Woods for Woolpit	East of England
Norse Wood	East of England
North Norfolk Community Woodland Trust	East of England
On Woods	East of England
Park Wood Nature Reserve	East of England
Pedlars Wood	East of England
Pedlars Wood Project	East of England

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Sadler's Wood Action Group (SWAG)	East of England
Scoulton Greenspace	East of England
Sea Of Trees	East of England
Snail Wood	East of England
Snape Woodland Group	East of England
St Albans Support Group - Woodland Trust	East of England
Stanton Woodland & Wildlife Action Group	East of England
Stowupland Community Woods	East of England
Stutton Grows	East of England
Tas Woodland Group	East of England
The Hoppit	East of England
Three Village Woodlands Group	East of England
Tillingham Woodland Interest Group	East of England
Trees Mean Life	East of England
Tyrrels Wood (WT)	East of England
Upper Lea Valley Group	East of England
Viking Forest	East of England
Wereham Wildlife Woodlands	East of England
Western Avenue and South Avenue Woodland Trust	East of England
Wickham Woods	East of England
Wild About Westgate	East of England
Wildwood	East of England
Woodland BATS	East of England
Woodland Ways	East of England
Woods Loke School	East of England
Yaxham Woodlands Community WildSpace project	East of England
Yoxwood	East of England
Friends of Ainslie and Larks Woods	London
Friends of Croham Hurst	London
Friends of Foxley	London
Friends of Kings Wood	London
Friends of Littleheath Woods	London
Friends of Queen's Wood	London
Friends of Selsdon Wood	London
Friends of the Woodland Walk	London
Sanderstead Plantation Partners	London
Stanford Comm.Woodland	London
Terra Incognita	London
Ashington Community Woodland	North East
Friends of Chopwell Wood	North East
Bank Hall Woodland	North West



Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Brantwood Trust	North West
Church Wood Conservation Group	North West
Forest of Burnley	North West
Friends of Anderton & Marbury (FOAM)	North West
Friends of Blackley Forest	North West
Friends of Chesham Woods	North West
Friends of Clinkham Woods	North West
Friends of Elnup Wood (Shevington, near Wigan)	North West
Friends of Furey Wood	North West
Friends of Millwood and Alder Wood	North West
Friends of Owley Wood	North West
Friends of Paupers Wood (Withington, Manchester)	North West
Friends of Penny Wood and Whiston Woods	North West
Friends of Prestwich Forest park	North West
Friends of Redisher Wood LNR (Holcombe Moor, Near Bury)	North West
Friends of Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port	North West
Friends of Woolton Woods - managed by Woolton Village Residents Assn.	North West
Gin Pit Village Tenants and Residents Association	North West
Jubilee Wood	North West
Littlewoods of Stockbridge Association	North West
Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve	North West
Murdishaw Valley	North West
Royal Oak Community Action Group	North West
Sadlers Wells Community Woodland ("SWCW")	North West
The Apple Trust	North West
The Friends of Storeton Wood	North West
Thwaite Brow Wood	North West
Trees of Burnley	North West
Witch Wood (Lytham St. Annes Civic Society)	North West
Ashford Community Woodland	South East
Barnett's Wood	South East
Bearsted Woodland Trust	South East
Birch Wood Association, The	South East
Bramingham Wood Volunteers	South East
Brandy Hole Copse Conservation Group	South East
Breach Wood Community Woodland	South East
Bredhurst Woodland Action Group	South East
Cinderhill Community Woodland	South East
Clay Field Copse	South East
Cliddesden Community Conservation Group	South East
Combwell Woodland Owners	South East

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Cumnor Hurst	South East
Dane Valley Woodland	South East
Econet	South East
Foal Hurst Wood	South East
Friends of Ashenground and Bolnore Woods	South East
Friends of Besselsleigh Wood	South East
Friends of Blundells Copse	South East
Friends of Brandy Hole Copse	South East
Friends of Clayfield Copse	South East
Friends of Goodwood Park and Hodshrove Woods	South East
Friends of Hodgemoor Wood	South East
Friends of Hollingbury & Burstead Woods	South East
Friends of Holly Hill	South East
Friends of Hollybank Woods	South East
Friends of Kings Wood	South East
Friends of Oakley Park	South East
Friends of Old Park Wood	South East
Friends of Omer's Gully Wood	South East
Friends of Park Wood	South East
Friends of Ruscombe Wood	South East
Friends of Spring Park Wood	South East
Friends of St. Leonards Forest	South East
Friends of Whitebeam Wood	South East
Hedge & Woodland Conservationists	South East
Holt Copse Conservation Volunteers	South East
Lake Wood Volunteer Group	South East
Leaffield Woodlands Ltd	South East
Lingfield Wildlife Area	South East
Little Garden Wood	South East
Marden Woods	South East
McIlroys Park	South East
Monken Hadley Conservation Volunteers	South East
New Ash Green Woodlands Group	South East
New England Wood Trust	South East
Northmoor Trust	South East
Oakley Woodlands Group	South East
Old Down & Beggarwood Wildlife Group	South East
Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers/Friends of Bucklebury Common	South East
Penn and Tylers Green Residents Society	South East
Roundel Preservation Company	South East
Shipton Parish Volunteers	South East

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Sturry Parish Council/Centenary Wood	South East
Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers	South East
Temple Hill Trust	South East
Tottington Woodlanders	South East
Tottington Woodlanders	South East
Trustees of Clinton Wood	South East
Warren Copse and Holbury Manor Conservation Group	South East
Wendlebury Woodland Group	South East
Witney Woodland Volunteers	South East
Woodlands Farm Trust	South East
Worthing Millenium Woodland Group	South East
Abbots Wood Community Group	South West
Ashen Copse Group	South West
Backwell Environment Trust	South West
Bishops Lydeard	South West
Bodmin Beacon	South West
Brookings Down Wood	South West
Clanger Wood Group	South West
Cotswold Voluntary Wardens	South West
Crenver Grove	South West
Dulcote, nr Wells	South West
Exeter Millenium Wood	South West
Exmouth Millenium Wood	South West
Frampton Millenium Green Trust	South West
Fremington Parish Tree Initiative	South West
Friends of Duncliffe Wood	South West
Friends of Kilminorth Woods	South West
Friends of Luxulyan Valley	South West
Friends of Maningham Wood	South West
Friends of Pentylands	South West
Friends of South Molton Community Woodland	South West
Friends Of Stanton Wood	South West
Friends of Stara Woods	South West
Friends of Towerhouse Wood	South West
Friends of Yate Common	South West
Friends of Yeo Valley Community Woodland	South West
Gillingham Action for Nature Group ,	South West
Glastonbury Woodland	South West
Hall Walk Wood	South West
Heatherstone Wood	South West
High Bickington Community Woodland	South West

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
High Ham Millennium Woodland	South West
Kieran's Community Wood	South West
Lineover Wood Volunteers	South West
Lopen Merriott	South West
Millenium Woodland	South West
Moor Trees	South West
Mortimores Wood	South West
Netherclay Project Group	South West
North Curry Parish Council	South West
Offwell Woodland and Wildlife Trust	South West
Okement Rivers Improvement Group	South West
Old Town Park Woodland Partnership Group	South West
Patchway Conservation Group	South West
Peatmoor Community Woodland Group	South West
Penhall Orchard	South West
Pentiddy Woods	South West
Penwith Environmental Network	South West
Plymouth Tree Network	South West
Saltlands, Bridgewater	South West
Shepton Mallet Community Woodland	South West
South Petherton Community Woodland	South West
Steeple Woods	South West
Steward Community Woodland	South West
Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group	South West
Swindon Wildlife Group	South West
The Sustainable Trust	South West
Three Brooks Nature Conservation Group	South West
Trees for Health	South West
Upton Community Woodland Group	South West
Vincients Wood Volunteers	South West
Wedmore Green Group	South West
Wellington Community Woodland Partnership	South West
West Cornwall Women's Land Trust	South West
Willsbridge Mill Local Group	South West
Wolborough Farm and Hele Barton Community Woodlands	South West
Woodcutters for Wildlife	South West
Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group	South West
Church Stretton Tree Group	West Midlands
Friends of Gorse Hall	West Midlands
Friends of Muckley Corner Common	West Midlands
Halesowen Wildlife Group	West Midlands

Community Woodland Groups ENGLAND	
Group Name	FC/European Region
Peckwood Centre	West Midlands
Pepper Wood Community Woodland	West Midlands
St Edwards Park Residents Group	West Midlands
Bainton Millenium Wood Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Barnburgh & Harlington Woodlands Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Bilton Conservation Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Bransholme Woodland Warriors	Yorkshire & The Humber
Colne Valley Tree Society	Yorkshire & The Humber
Edgehill Community Woodland	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Acomb Wood	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Beech Grove Wood and Fishponds Wood	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Bradley Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Buck Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Buntings Wood	Yorkshire & the Humber
Friends of Gipton Wood	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Hagg Wood	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Judy Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Longley Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Northcliffe Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of Raincliffe Woods	Yorkshire & The Humber
Friends of St. Ives	Yorkshire & The Humber
Heaton Woods Trust	Yorkshire & The Humber
Honley Village Trust	Yorkshire & The Humber
Lostock & Chew Moor Conservation Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Mayflower Woods	Yorkshire & the Humber
Nidd Gorge Knaresborough Conservation Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
North Ferriby Riverside Walkway Committee	Yorkshire & The Humber
Periwood Wildlife Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Skelton Woods Environment Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Thirsk Community Woodlands Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Tickhill Countryside Group	Yorkshire & The Humber
Woodscape	Yorkshire & The Humber