

Community Forestry Scotland

A Report for Forest Research

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April 2009

Acknowledgements:

With special thanks to:

The Community Woodlands Association and Reforesting Scotland

The information and opinions contained here are presented by the authors and are not the responsibility of the Forestry Commission or Forest Research.

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Organisations such as Reforesting Scotland appeared. Started originally by Bernard and Emma Planterose with the journal, the idea was to create a movement to reforest Scotland, bringing back a forest culture. Andy Wightman was the first development officer who organised the influential study tour to Norway.

'It was very much inspired by overseas experience. In a nutshell, they wanted to make Scotland more like Norway, and to tell the story of deforestation and then take action to bring back the forests, it was the accumulated effort of many people from many different backgrounds. Initially this was achieved through information sharing, telling the stories of individual projects, with an emphasis on native species. Land reform was a major item on the agenda, which was then followed by the community woodland movement which came to dominate RS's work.
(Donald McPhillimy, Pers. com).

They strongly advocated alternative models of forestry which are associated with higher levels of local employment creation, to work for a balance that keeps people on the land; they emphasized the importance of provision of independent assistance and provided information and advice.

'Even though membership is open to all, there were concerns that the organisation could be taken over by 'the establishment' and members were vetted, however this is no longer the case'
(Donald McPhillimy, Pers com)

Reforesting Scotland lobbied for recognition and support of community woodlands. They actively sought out groups (partly through the very successful Scottish Rural Development Forestry Programme), encouraged them, provided publications and workshops for them, covered them in the Journal, and networked them. Today as a campaigning organisation they work with government agencies and respond to public consultations to lobby for policy changes that will further their vision. They have helped bring about a transformation in the way Scotland's forest resource is viewed.

Through the 1990's individual communities, such as Laggan achieved an immense breakthrough on behalf of rural communities. The community actively marketed their radical ideas with respect to forest ownership and management to key Scottish politicians, government officials and others in influential positions. This culminated in the personal support of the Secretary of State who asked that the Forestry Commission work in partnership with the Laggan Community in order to explore opportunities and devise a new scheme whereby Community Forests can be established to mutual benefit, which resulted in a pioneering partnership agreement with the FC to manage the woodland at Laggan. It finally became clear that the FC had to respond to local activists and the growing NGO support for community involvement in their local woodlands (Slee, 2006).

Event	Date	Details
Scottish Forestry forum	2002	Policy-level engagement processes were devolved with the establishment of the Scottish Forestry Forum, an advisory grouping of forestry stakeholder with membership balanced between economic, environmental and social interests.
Land Reform (Scotland) Act - Community Right to Buy	2003	The Community Right to Buy relates to Part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It provides community bodies representing rural areas in Scotland to register an interest in, and buy, registered land when it comes to be sold.
Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) National Forest Land Scheme	2005	National Forest Land is the forests, woods, open land and other property owned by Scottish ministers on behalf of the nation, and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland. The National Forest Land Scheme covers four key strands that offer enormous potential for growth in the capacity and empowerment of the community woodland sector: Community Acquisition by purchase or lease - giving communities the opportunity to buy or lease National Forest Land where they can provide increased public benefits. It goes one step further than Community Right to Buy because it gives this opportunity even though the land has not come up for sale. Community Acquisition is in addition to the community's Right to Buy under the Land Reform Act Land for Affordable Housing - allowing Registered Social Landlords (housing associations) and other housing bodies to buy National Forest Land to provide affordable housing. Sponsored Sale of Surplus Land - giving communities and others the opportunity to buy National Forest Land which is surplus to requirements. Surplus land is land that makes little net contribution to Forestry Commission Scotland's public policy objectives. Crofter Forestry- gives communities the opportunity to create woodland crofts
FCS Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT)	2005	Forestry Commission Scotland's WIAT initiative aims to increase the contribution made by woodland to quality of life in Scotland's urban and post-industrial areas. It acknowledges that much of urban woodland is under-managed, that community woodlands have considerable social value, and that derelict and vacant land can be transformed by woodland. WIAT seeks to combine improving the environment through better managed woodland with giving communities a sense of ownership through involvement in their management. WIAT effort will be focused on places within 1km of towns of 2000 people.
FCS Education Strategy (Woods for Learning)	2006	The Woods for Learning strategy outlines the direction and development for FCS's education work for the next three years including strengthening links to woods and forests guiding its work with young people, in primary and secondary schools, and outside school. Woods for Learning is all about using Scotland's trees, woods and forests to contribute to improving the life chances of young people and to show forestry as an exemplar of sustainable development. FCS is looking to work with the education sector and others to encourage the use of woods for learning by: - managing the national forests. Forestry Commission Scotland provides for a variety of recreation activities and experiences, as well as learning; - working with the Forest Education Initiative partnership fund to support the development of educational activities linked to the use of woods and forestry; and - working with others, in education and other partners, to develop programmes for use in schools and woods.
Scottish Forestry Strategy	2006	The Scottish Forestry Strategy is the Scottish Executive's framework for taking forestry forward through the first half of this century, Its core principles are based on sustainable development and social inclusion, achieved through a culture of 'forestry for and with people' and delivered in well managed forests and woodlands that integrate effectively with other land uses and businesses. Outcome 1 'Improved health and well-being of people and their communities' includes is concerned with assisting community participation and includes 'develop strong relationships between communities and their local woodlands', Theme 4 on 'Community Development' includes - Support 'community ownership and management on the national forest estate, where this will bring increased benefits'.
Woodland Crofts	2007	The Crofting Reform Act 2007 makes provision for the creation of new crofts including woodland crofts. Woodland crofts range from being mainly woodland, to mainly agricultural with a woodland element. They link housing, local rural livelihoods and woodland management.

Table 2: Timeline of events affecting the Community Woodland movement in Scotland

The Community Woodlands Association

The Community Woodlands Association is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and was established in 2003 following the steering group being established at the 2002 Community Woodland Conference at Betty Hill and a nationwide consultation of community woodland groups. As the direct representative body of Scotland's community woodland groups, its aims are to help community woodland groups across the country achieve their aspirations and potential, providing advice, assistance and information, facilitating networking and training, and representing and promoting community woodlands to the wider world.

Link:

<http://www.communitywoods.org/index.php/>

North Highland Forest Trust

North Highland Forest Trust is an independent charity that was established in 1999. NHFT evolved from The North West Sutherland Native Wood Initiative which was established in 1993, which supported crofters with access to grant schemes. This expanded to NHFT to a wider social and educational organisation.

The aims of NHFT are to:

- To facilitate access to finance for woodland development where this is constrained for social or other reasons
- To promote and facilitate community woodland in all aspects of woodland development and through a wide range of formal and informal arrangements.
- To promote and facilitate integrated woodland development with particular emphasis on a broad multiplicity of benefits so as to fulfil the aspirations of all members of the community.

It has 50 members ranging from crofters, and woodland groups to agencies such as SNH. Their main focus is information and advice, particularly at the moment with respect to SRDP. They are actively involved with other groups such as CWA, Scottish Native Woods, The Forest Policy Group, Sutherland and Caithness Biodiversity groups and LEADER implementation groups. They work local rangers, the Highland Council and Woodland Trust Scotland.

Link:

<http://www.nhft.org.uk/>

Borders Forest Trust

Borders Forest Trust was inspired by Borders Community Woodlands, and initially funded under MFST. Established in 1996 it is an environmental charity and a membership organisation, now with over 600 members. Its aims being to:

- Develop the community woodland movement in the Borders
- Develop and manage ambitious habitat restoration and community woodland projects
- Reverse the decline of woodlands and wild places.

BFT coordinates an integrated range of projects bringing environmental, social and economic benefits to the Scottish Borders region.

It works in partnership with a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as with local and national members of the business community to establish new native woods and community woodlands and to research, manage, protect and restore existing semi-natural woodlands.

Link:

<http://www.bordersforesttrust.org/>

The Central Scotland Forest Trust

Formed in 1991, The Central Scotland Forest Trust leads the partnership involved in creation of the Central Scotland Forest located in South Lanarkshire, although the Trust can offer help and support beyond the Forest Boundaries.

The Central Scotland Forest Trust has two key roles in the creation of the Central Scotland Forest. Strategically, it defines the vision for the Forest, assembles the resources to create it, engages and co-ordinates partners, promotes the Forest and woodlands and monitors progress. On a practical level, it acts as an implementer, undertaking projects including woodland planting (on derelict land, farmland and in urban areas), woodland management, access and recreation works (paths and facilities) and a range of community projects and landscape improvements.

It also provides opportunities for work-based training and volunteering. They can usually provide help, guidance and in some circumstances funding for community based projects that contribute to the Forest.

Link:

www.csft.org.uk

