

Duddingston Field Group Edinburgh, Scotland



An urban community woodland group leasing a field from the local authority on a peppercorn rent basis for tree planting

DUDDINGSTON FIELD GROUP

This case study is one of a set written as part of a Forest Research project. Some case studies are written by the community group, others by researchers who visited and interviewed group members, but they have all been validated and endorsed by the community groups.

Forest Research developed a standard method for describing the case studies, outlined in Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2013 "A framework for sharing experiences of community woodland groups" Forestry Commission Research Note 15 (available from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications).

The case study comprises three parts:

1. The **Group Profile** provides essential information about the form and function of the community woodland group. Profiles were prepared following the methodology
2. The **Change Narrative** which documents key moments in the evolution of the community woodland group with a particular focus on the evolution of engagement and empowerment
3. The **Engagement and Impacts Timeline** documents milestones in the development of the community woodland group, its woodland and any assumed or evidenced impacts.

The case studies collectively provide a resource which documents the diversity and evolution of community woodland groups across Scotland, Wales and England. The method ensures that the case studies are consistent and can be compared with each other. We welcome further case studies to add to this growing resource.

For further information, and for the detailed case study method, please contact:

Bianca Ambrose-Oji (Bianca.Ambrose-Oji@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

For further information about this group, please contact:

duddingstonfield@gmail.com

1. Group profile

Woodland: Duddingston field woodland, Duddingston, Edinburgh
Map ref: NT 283729
Webpage: <http://www.duddingstonfield.org.uk>
Date of profile: February 2014
Resources: Interview and site visit, Annual Reports (first six months, 2011-2012, 2012-2013), DFG website

1. Institutional context (in February 2014)	
1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)	<p>The meadow and woodland managed by Duddingston Field Group (DFG) is owned by the City of Edinburgh Council, which leases it out on a rolling one-year contract. DFG pays an annual 'peppercorn' rent of £100 to the council.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Lease (public)</p>
1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)	<p>Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) is guaranteed by the Land Reform Act. The lower access to the woodland crosses third party land in community (but not DFG!) ownership of Duddingston Village Conservation Society (DVCS). The higher access to the land crosses land in ownership of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC).</p> <p>The rights concerning the use of woodland products have not been formally arranged with the Council. Small scale use of timber as wood fuel by group members is, however, tolerated. On-street visitor parking is available within Duddingston village.</p>

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<p>1.3 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)</p>	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>As part of their lease agreement with CEC, the group is required to ensure public open access is provided to the field. In addition, the group must not keep any livestock other than poultry nor engage in agricultural activities on site. The group is also not permitted to trade products acquired from council-owned land. There are no formal requirements in regard to tree planting. The manager of the neighbouring CEC-owned Meadowfield Park pays informal visits to the Field.</p>
<p>2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise</p>	
<p>2.1 Group members, representation and decision making</p>	<p>The group primarily serves the interests of the Craigentenny and Duddingston ward, and secondary the interests of people from beyond those areas visiting of Duddingston Field. Although membership is limited to people actively contributing to the group, the views of the Craigentenny and Duddingston ward are being considered through contacts with the Craigentenny and Duddingston Environment Forum and Community Health Initiative. The Environment Forum is a component of the local Neighbourhood Partnership and is concerned with carrying out environmental improvements. The Community Health Initiative serves to improve support and capacity within the community to support people with health needs. Committee members often interact with community members on an informal basis as well.</p> <p>Group membership has steadily grown over the past two years to about 20 people. Only volunteers active in the Field and interested in decision-making can join as a member (see Section 2.3 for rationale). Membership is not limited to members of the community; the majority of members are, however, local people. Membership is free.</p> <p>The Committee comprises six members and is responsible for the day-to-day decision-making. The Committee has co-opted one member with specific grafting knowledge. Formally, Committee members are elected on the AGM by the group members. In reality, only a limited number of members are interested in joining the Committee. As a result, all of the original Committee members are still on the board.</p> <p>The Committee formally meets on a monthly basis in the morning of each woodland volunteering day. The</p>

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	members-only AGM is well-attended (c. 90% attendance rate on average).
2.2 Communication and learning processes	<p>Communication regarding events, meetings and volunteering days takes place through the mailing list of volunteers, Facebook-page, DFG website, local posters and a locally distributed ('Paddock') newsletter. Where possible, new visitors of the field are actively approached and asked for email addresses.</p> <p>Information about the woodland and related activities is also posted on a notice board at the lower site entrance. Visitor information regarding several points of interest is provided on chalkboards throughout the field. The group organizes an annual Open Day with field-related events, which is regarded as an effective means of attracting new visitors.</p> <p>The access points of the field have clear entrance signs displaying the name of the field, which includes a QR-code that can be scanned with a mobile device. This takes the visitor to an app (http://www.thefieldguide.co.uk) showing a map of the field including the paths and icons for different points of interest (e.g., benches, orchard, wall, woodland etc.). When clicked, more information on each of these woodland elements can be consulted. This app has been derived from Open StreetMap (http://www.openstreetmap.org), which is an open-source rival to Google Maps. Unfortunately, this app is currently out of use.</p> <p>Each year, the group prepares an annual report, which serves to evaluate group functioning and achievements. Overall, a high degree of professionalism has enabled the group to plan and monitor their activities right from the start, which helped to deliver on their objectives.</p>
2.3 Structure and legal status	<p>The group is currently organized as an Unincorporated Association. This model was chosen as the group needed a constitution for signing the lease agreement and this particular one required the least effort to adopt. Under the present legal form limits grant funding opportunities are limited and the Chair is personally liable for actions by DFG. For these reasons, and to enable ownership of assets, the group is planning to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in the near future</p> <p>Classification of legal form: Unincorporated Association</p>

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<p>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</p>	<p>DFG is obliged to adopt risk assessment procedures for the planning of events as part of their public liability insurance policy. The group also prepares annual reports providing an overview of last year’s activities, funds raised and advice gained, as well as an overview of the actions planned for the year ahead. This is not a formal requirement of the lease but greatly appreciated by the CEC and could contribute to achieving the ambition of a long-term lease with CEC.</p>
<p>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</p>	<p>In preparing their bid, DFG consulted with interested local people and prepared a multi-year work plan with broad management guidelines separated by management compartments. Some flexibility is built into the work plan to allow for adaptive responding to the experience of actually managing the land.</p> <p>The aims of DFG according to constitution are:</p> <p>To maintain and conserve the land by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological habitat restoration / creation • Involving a wide range of people within the local community in managing the land • Involving other groups in using the land for learning <p>Overall aim of plan: Public access and recreation, conservation and heritage</p>
<p>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</p>	<p>The management framework is implemented by members of the Committee, who are assisted by a group of people, mainly local residents, to undertake management activities. Typical volunteer activities include: Mowing, raking, seeding, grafting, planting and construction work. All work is done on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>Peer-to-peer training on tree grafting has been provided by local experts. All trees on site have been surveyed and numbered, and works have been undertaken to ensure tree safety by professionals, for which DFG made use of CEC-funding.</p>

2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability

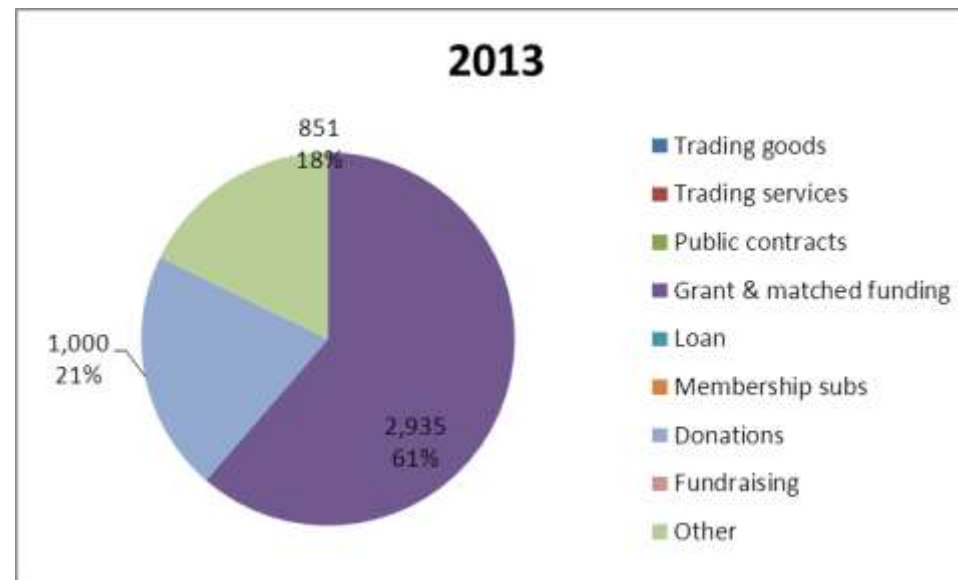
To purchase tools, equipment and materials, the group relies on grant funding, which is actively pursued to cover projects identified by the Committee. In addition, there has been a large one-off donation by a member of the community. The group has furthermore raised money through The Golden Apple fruit tree sponsorship scheme. This scheme allows people to sponsor a fruit tree for £25. There are no opportunities to develop social enterprise under the current conditions of the lease agreement.

The overall sources of income for the group in 2012-2013:

Grant aid and matched funding: 61% of total

Donations: 21% of total

Other (tree sponsorship): 18% of total



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2.8 Benefit distribution rules	Any income from donations in return to goods amounting from group activities is re-invested into woodland management.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	The group has a rolling one-year lease agreement with the City of Edinburgh Council, which is reviewed each year. DFG also has an informal partnership with DVCS, which owns and manages the adjoining community paddock and garden, around sharing land management skills and expertise and combining Open Days. There is also a degree of shared membership between both bodies.
3.2 Associations	<p>DFG is a member of the Community Woodland Association (CWA), which runs a mailing list that is used for specific enquiries (e.g., advice on constructing a composting toilet). The group is also a member of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) for insurance purposes.</p> <p>DFG has a working relationship with CEC's Holyrood Park Ranger Service (advice & support on habitat creation, management & monitoring), Scottish Wildlife Trust (advice on habitat management), Scottish Natural Heritage (advice on habitat creation and management), Duddingston & Craigentiny Health Initiative and Environment Forum (engaging special needs groups & involving small businesses), a local nursery and other community groups within Edinburgh.</p>
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest/ woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the woodland and orchards together is c. 2.5 ha (of which 0.3 ha is orchard). • The woodland is located in the village of Duddingston and borders Holyrood Park, Meadowfield Park and a field owned by the church. The visitor attractions of Duddingston Loch and Bawsinch Nature Reserve are also in the direct vicinity. • Duddingston, situated within the boundaries of Edinburgh city, is easily accessible. The woodland sits on a steep gradient and can be accessed from the north (from Meadowfield Park) via a kissing gate and from the south (from the village). The southern entrance is accessed from a paddock that is owned by the

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Duddingston Village Conservation Society (along with a village green and a community garden). On-street parking is available in Duddingston. The woodland includes a circular walking route ('The Measured Walk') with mown paths. Six benches have been installed at regular intervals along this path to improve accessibility. Shortcuts to the circular are provided by two additional paths.

- The large majority of trees are native species. Newly planted species include, but are not limited to: Crab apple, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, ash, oak, rowan, birch, elder, hazel, cherry and willow. A group of willows for coppicing have been planted in a separate compartment. The veteran trees along the northern stone wall are: Oak, ash, sycamore, beech, lime and Norway maple.
- The woodland trees are very young, the first being planted in 2011. New planting is still ongoing with around 1000 trees and shrubs planted between autumn 2012 and autumn 2013. Thus far, the group has planted about 2000-3000 trees. There are a number of veteran trees near the walled edge of the field (60-120 years old). The woodland also includes an apple orchard. Here the group aims to grow an 'apple library' including a wide variety of modern and traditional species, with a specific focus on Scottish varieties. Currently, the apple orchard includes about 100 trees, with plans to expand to over 150 trees. There is also a plum orchard on the field including 8 trees.
- **Classification of woodland type: Broadleaved (young trees)**
- The older trees near the wall were poorly maintained before DFG took on the lease and had been damaged by horses being kept on the field previously. The group commissioned an arborist to survey these trees and work has been undertaken to make six trees safe in the summer of 2013. One tree was felled. Of the newly planted woodland trees, around 20-30 percent was lost in the first year due to summer drought, tall grass and a high vole population. The branches and felled tree have been left on site for biodiversity purposes. Furthermore, natural fractures have been created on trees that have undergone surgery to attract wildlife.
- There is an area of wetland on the field where water from higher grounds flows to a cistern at the lower

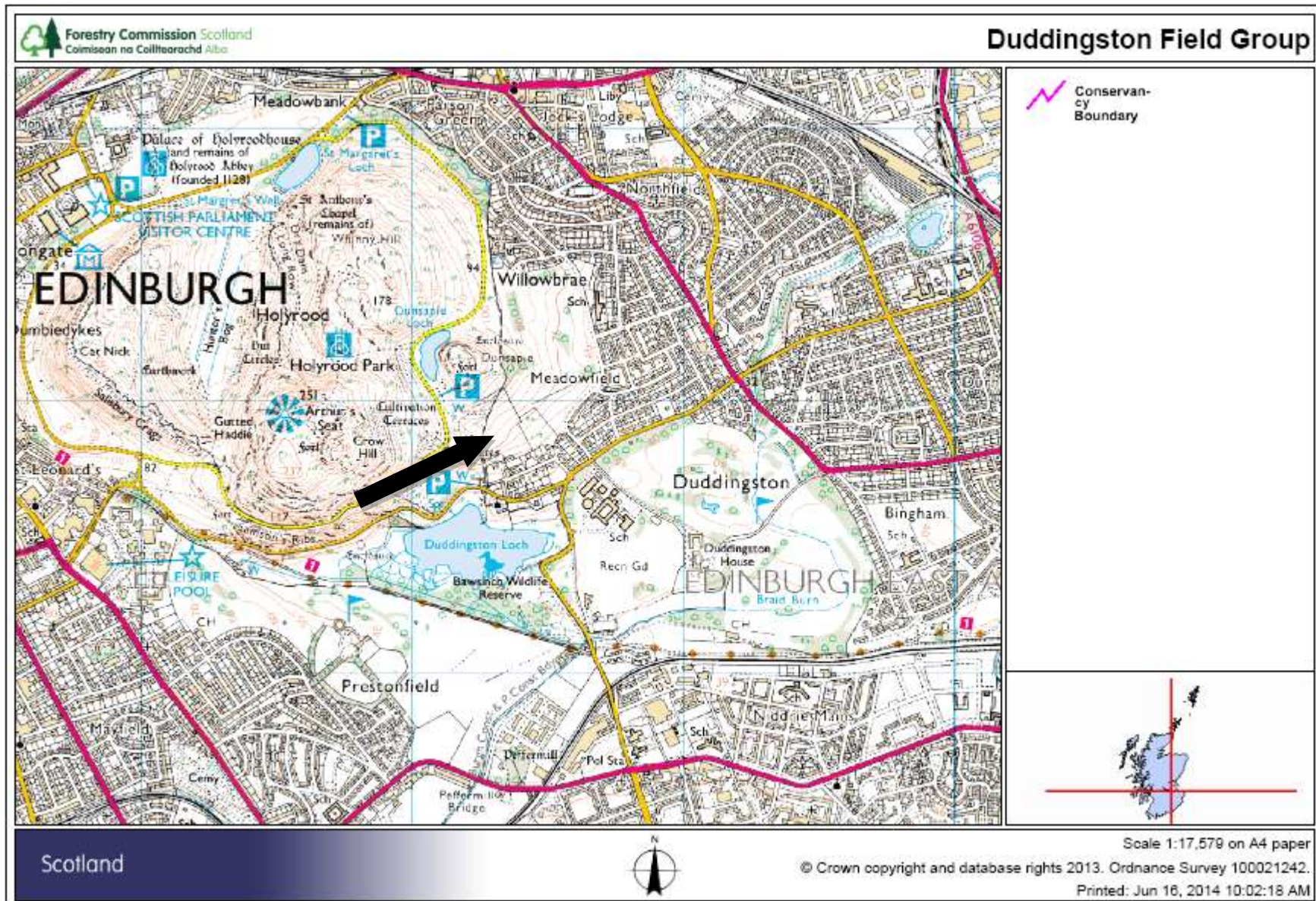
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	<p>end of the plot. The group experiments with creating a wetland habitat and recently installed a boardwalk to enable pedestrians to cross this area. In addition, two habitat piles (of branches and logs) have been created near the cistern. The remaining land on Duddingston field is maintained as a meadow. Features of interest further include a man-made Labyrinth, which can be walked for quiet reflection, a chicken pen, a tree nursery and sheds with equipment and tools on a neighbouring paddock that is also in community ownership. The field is circumvented by a 17th century stone wall that has monument status and is managed by Historic Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group has not yet undertaken a full biodiversity survey. However, a bat survey was conducted as part of the tree surgery work in 2013. This showed evidence of bat roosting sites but not of bat hibernacula. Given its location next to Holyrood Park and Duddingston Loch, a variety of bird species can be encountered. Most notable amongst these are: Buzzard, kestrel, woodpecker and pheasant.
4.2 Woodland and group funding sources	<p>A start-up grant for DFG was secured from DVCS (£700). Materials for access gates and the boardwalk, as well as a scythe mower, were purchased with support of the People’s Postcode Trust. A grant from Central Scotland Green Network (£300) was used towards purchasing fruit trees and labelling equipment. This was further supported with funds from the Golden Apple Sponsorship Scheme (£851). The group received a grant from Foundation Scotland for installing ‘the Measured Walk’ and tree safety work along the route. Tree safety work was further supported by the City of Edinburgh East Neighbourhood Partnership (Council Community Fund). Finally, a one-off donation from a local person (£1,000) served to co-fund purchase of the mower and materials for benches.</p> <p>The Woodland Trust provided the group with 1,600 (4 x 400 packs) woodland trees free of charge. Other trees have been obtained from Enable Nursery at the Inch, Westburn Village Community Group, and local gardens. Lockwood Forestry donated 200 tree guards.</p> <p>Small sums of money have been donated to the group in return for firewood.</p>

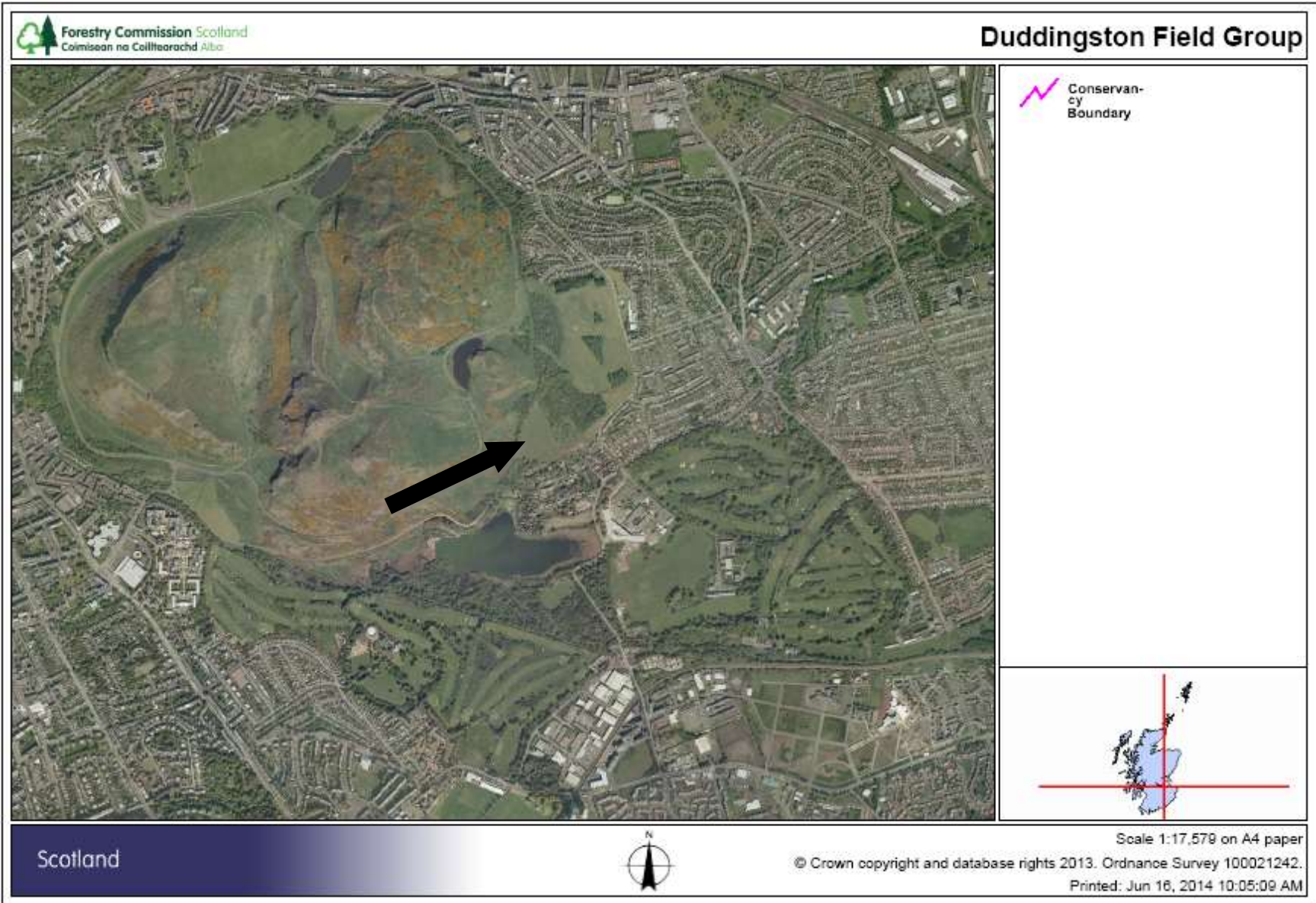
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4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital	<p>Managing the field has led DFG to discover many relevant skills and qualifications internal to the group. These include: Forestry, botany, orchard cultivation, fundraising, project management, mechanical engineering, communicating with public bodies and First Aid. In the past, candidates with skills relevant to managing the field have been actively approached by DFG with the request of being co-opted into the Committee. Local residents have provided expertise in surveying and map making, fruit tree planting, willow and forest tree planting and propagating.</p> <p>Members of the group have been trained in grafting apple trees and tree planting by local experts; activities which the group now successfully takes on themselves. Expertise on habitat creation, management and monitoring has been gained externally from SNH, SWT, The City of Edinburgh Council and the Holyrood Park Ranger Service.</p>
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2. Change Narrative

1. Group History. Moments of change, motivations and engagement

After a field leased from CEC for horse grazing fell vacant in 2011, a number of local residents approached CEC to discuss the potential of a community lease. The field was located adjacent to land already managed by the community and there were fears that it would be sold off for development. Furthermore, it was seen as an interesting opportunity to engage in ecological restoration and provide a high amenity recreational space for the community.

Initial discussions revealed that the Council was receptive to the plans of the field group as the provision of community greenspace is compatible with its strategic aims. In the process of making the bid, two public meetings were held in the Church Hall with an attendance of 20-30 people each. The first of these served to determine support for the idea to sign a lease agreement for the field. A small number of local residents initially opposed a community lease out of a fear that the field would be used for allotment gardening, but the meeting was effective in winning their support. The second meeting served to discuss objectives of the Field. A steering group was established following the second meeting (**informal enjoyment to group formation**). One of the discussion points during these early days was the question whether the Field should be governed by a subgroup of DVCS, which was already managing community land on a neighbouring plot, or by a separate body. It was chosen to set up the organisation separately from DVCS in order to ensure flexible and quick decision-making.

Signing the lease agreement with The City of Edinburgh Council in October 2011 marked the transition from **group formation to decision-making**. The steering group of five local people initially met on a weekly basis to discuss plans for the field. During the first six months, public events (e.g., tree planting, seed picking, grafting, orchard making etc.) were held on a monthly basis to carry out planned activities and gain further feedback from the community.

2. Challenges, barriers and opportunities for change: Key issues in evolution

Facilitating factors

- **The urban location of the site** aided community involvement (in greenspace activities), which is a strategic priority of The City of Edinburgh Council. This allowed the group to sign a peppercorn lease before it was put back on the market for a commercial lease.
- **Professional links between members of the community and the Head of Edinburgh Parks Department** improved trust in the members of DFG, which facilitated the process of agreeing the lease.
- **The experience of some group members in managing community land** as (Board) members of DVCS has contributed to adequate planning of activities and delivery upon targets right from the start.
- A group of **active and highly motivated local people**, which permitted a lot to be done in a short period of time.
- DFG is not permitted to sell any goods from the woodland. Therefore, **external funding** and group member **affinity with fundraising** have been of crucial importance in driving this project forward.
- The **strong social networks of group members** have been of importance in involving people with specific skills, such as a botanist and an orchardist, in group activities.
- **Partnering organisations** have provided advice in habitat creation, management and monitoring, as well as affordable public liability insurance.
- **Running the group as a separate entity** from existing community land managers DVCS and **being selective in offering membership to active volunteers** has allowed the group to respond rapidly to circumstances, which permitted achieving a lot in a very short period of time.

Barriers

- Before DFG took over, the field was leased from the Council by a local horse owner. The horse owner terminated the lease following an increase in the rental price. The horse owner was therefore unhappy with the fact that the community managed to secure a peppercorn lease agreement with the Council. **Opposition by the horse owner to the peppercorn lease agreement with the community** therefore posed an initial problem for DFG, although it never

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threatened the lease deal. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, DFG offered to hand over part of the field to the horse owner free of charge. However, this construction was not approved by The City of Edinburgh Council because the terms of the lease do not permit agricultural activities or keeping livestock.

- There was only a **limited timeframe between group formation and the starting date of the lease**. As a result, the group has not yet been able to organize themselves beyond the level of an Unincorporated Association.

3. Evolution of income streams

The group has only started operations recently and therefore all relevant information has been captured in Section 2.7 of the Profile.

4. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts before group involvement

Before the lease agreement with DFG was signed, the field was leased by a local person, who used it for horse grazing. The area has a rich history as signified by landscape elements such as the wall with monument status.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
-2011	The City of Edinburgh Council (managed by local horse owner)	Livestock keeping (local knowledge, tree bark damage, cistern with livestock access)	None	No public access, use rights with lessee.

5. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts since group involvement

DFG aims to provide a high amenity community woodland and has planted >2000 trees in order to achieve this. This includes a large apple orchard with >100 trees and a wide range of varieties, as well as a plum orchard and a willow coppice. To supply

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new trees, DFG also maintains a tree nursery and a nursery bed for rootstocks intended for grafting. The group attempts to act in the interest of the local community, which is evidenced by regular consultation and group receptiveness to local initiatives and input, such as the installation of the meadow Labyrinth. The woodland also includes a chicken pen, which provides eggs and functions as a visitor attraction.

As a result of the community lease, the field is now accessible to the public, who make active use of this opportunity. The group is not recording visitor numbers, but is planning to build their own electronic counter. Accessibility has further been improved through creating 'The Measured Walk', which is a circular walkway with benches at regular intervals. Furthermore, remedial works on dangerous trees have been undertaken and visitors are provided with the opportunity of learning more on the background of, and plans for, the field via an Open StreetMap mobile app, chalkboards and a notice board.

DFG aims to improve biodiversity through working with SWT, SNH and a local ranger to preserve and improve the variety of habitats on the field. It also planted native trees in the woodland, commissioned a bat survey and created natural fractures on mature trees to provide a habitat for invertebrates.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2011-	The City of Edinburgh Council (managed by DFG)	Public access and recreation Improve biodiversity (bat survey)	Planting of >2000 trees, planting of orchard and willow coppice, creation of circular walking route, boardwalk, remedial works carried out on unsafe trees, designed mobile app. Planting of native trees.	Land Reform Act. Use rights are with DFG.

6. Future Plans

DFG is in the transition from development to maintenance. This will create more scope for undertaking more people-oriented, as opposed to environmental, activities such as organizing educational events and involving special needs groups in woodland activities. Rather than developing the capacity to lead groups internally, DFG hopes to intensify engagement with existing charities that support disadvantaged people by providing an appealing community resource.

The group is in the process of applying to become a single tier SCIO. The single tier structure implies that it will be governed by the Trustees without additional member input. The group has opted for this structure in order to avoid the administrative burden associated with maintaining up-to-date membership records and to maintain flexibility in response to new developments. The number of Trustees will be increased from six now to about 15 after the new legal form is adopted.

The group hopes that SCIO-status will permit them to sign a five-year lease agreement with the Council, as opposed to the current lease agreement that needs to be renewed each year. DFG is also planning to develop a detailed management plan with specific targets, reflecting the altered objectives of the group.

3. Engagement and impacts timeline

Year	Event	ENGAGEMENT	Reasons (Barriers and challenges)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Social (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Woodland (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Financial /Economic (evidence)
2011	Previous lessee terminates the lease agreement.	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To prevent development from happening on the site	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
2011	Lease agreement signed with Edinburgh council	GROUP FORMATION to DECISION MAKING	To provide public access, enhance amenity value and permit ecological restoration.	Increase of visitor numbers	Planting of trees	Receipt of grant funding