



South West Community Woodlands Trust Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland

*A grassroots group that owns and manages a 12 ha woodland, without external funding
or timber trading*

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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:

Jools Cox (joolscox@tiscali.co.uk)

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1. Group profile

<p>Woodland: Taliesin Woodland Map ref: NX 793556 Webpage: http://www.swcwt.org Date of profile: March 2014 Resources: Group website, interview with SWCWT member</p>

1. Institutional context (in March 2014)	
1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)	<p>The woodland at Taliesin is owned by South West Community Woodlands Trust (SWCWT). In addition, SWCWT engages in partnership management with FCS of the woodland at adjoining Potterland Hill.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Ownership</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. Taliesin can be accessed directly from the public road. A parking bay for about three cars is available directly opposite the entrance on FCS land. FCS permits Taliesin visitor parking. Additional parking space is available along the road. Access to the woodland by motorized vehicles is prevented by means of a large boulder placed at the entrance.</p> <p>SWCWT allows sleepovers in their buildings and wild camping in tents pitched on site. Taliesin is situated close to a popular Sustrans cycling route and therefore it is a popular sleepover destination for cyclists.</p> <p>SWCWT maintains all rights to woodland products.</p>

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1.3 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>The terms and conditions of the FCS planting grant.</p>
2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise	
2.1 Group members, representation and decision making	<p>SWCWT currently has about 200 members of which about 75 percent are paying their annual membership contributions. Membership is open to all, regardless of residential location. Most members are from the nearby villages of Auchencairn, Palnackie and Castle Douglas, but the group also has members from further afield such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. . The membership fee is £5 p/annum with a request to donate more if possible.</p> <p>Day-to-day decision-making is done by the group of 12 Trustees running SWCWT. Besides the AGM there are five official board meetings each year, as well as informal meetings before multi-day events in order to discuss setting up and taking down camp.</p> <p>Trustees are chosen by the membership and members are involved in decision-making on the AGM. Each year, all Trustees step down, but they can be re-elected an infinite number of times.</p>
2.2 Communication and learning processes	<p>Direct communications with the membership are mainly done through the mailing list and concern information on events and the AGM. A newsletter is distributed annually by email and by post. This includes a membership form with a payslip.</p> <p>Events, as well as background information on both the woodland and group, are also being communicated on the SWCWT website and via a Facebook Group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/261560733936150/)</p> <p>The group advertises many of its events through the Community Woodland Association (CWA) website. As a result, it has attracted visitors from across the country.</p> <p>The group engages in informal discussions to evaluate group functioning and the developing woodland.</p>

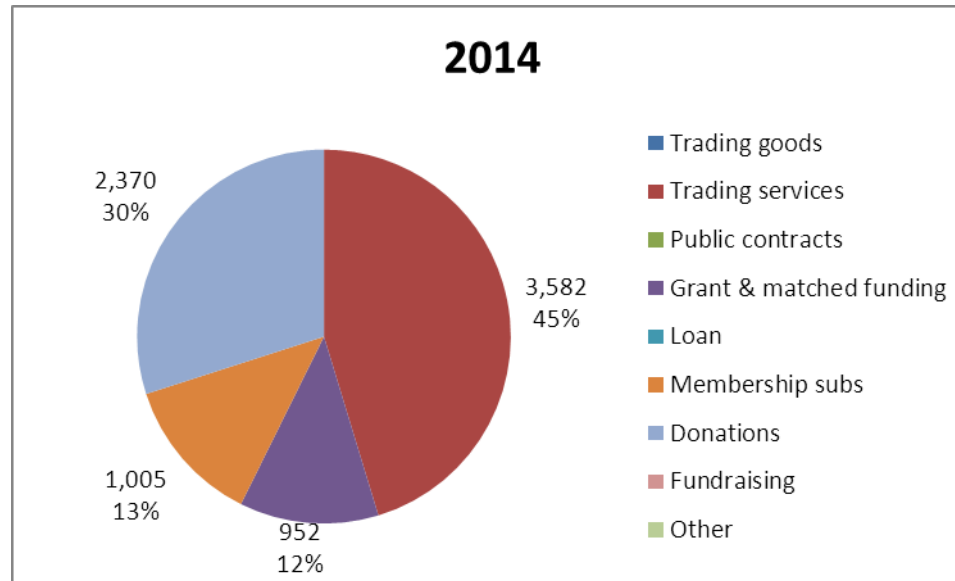
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<p>2.3 Structure and legal status</p>	<p>South West Community Woodlands Trust is constituted as a company limited by guarantee (SC171277) with charitable status (SC025438). These are run as a 'joint enterprise'. The group is registered as a company despite not doing any trading because they were advised to do so when applying for Millennium Forest Trust funding for a region-wide tree planting project in the past. Before that the group was constituted as a Trust, which explains the current name of the group.</p> <p>Classification of legal form: Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee</p>
<p>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</p>	<p>Company Law, Charity Law.</p> <p>SWCWT makes use of a public liability insurance from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). This brings about a statutory responsibility to prepare a risk assessment for all woodland-related events.</p>
<p>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</p>	<p>The group does not have a formal management plan and operates on the basis of shared consensus. A draft management plan for the coppice work is available online (http://tipiglen.co.uk/Draft_Management.pdf).</p> <p>According to their website South West Community Woodlands Trust and the Orchard and Wild Harvest Project aim to inspire, educate, provide courses and fun events, all in the spirit of living at one with our natural environment. The key aim is to educate children and adults to respect, understand and enjoy the countryside and their natural heritage.</p> <p>In addition, the group aims to restore native woodland and enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>A specific aim of the Orchard and Wild Harvest Project is to reduce carbon emissions and improve health and well-being through planting and promoting locally grown fruit (trees).</p> <p>Overall aim of plan: Education</p>

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2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan	<p>SWCWT undertakes their activities at Taliesin on a voluntary basis. It does not own any equipment and woodland management therefore fully relies on member contributions.</p> <p>The Orchard and Wild Harvest Project is managed by one member of SWCWT, who is involved in outreach and tree planting. She receives a small compensation to cover expenses, which is funded through donations in return for activities undertaken under the banner of this project.</p>
2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability	<p>Currently, the main income stream for Taliesin is donations. All training and events organized at Taliesin are free of charge but a donation of £10 per day (£5 for children) is suggested. In addition, the charity receives occasional pledges and subsidy from other charities for organizing certain events. Finally, some income is generated through membership fees. There is no need or desire to develop social enterprise.</p> <p>The Orchard and Wild Harvest project is funded through tree donations made by schools and local people and SWCWT member donations. In line with the account statement, this income has been listed under “trading services” in the pie chart below.</p> <p>The main costs for SWCWT include purchasing materials for events and/or new structures, paying trainers and contractors (e.g., pond digging), subsistence and covering training courses of volunteers (e.g., Forest School). The main expenses for the Orchard and Wild Harvest Project are purchasing fruit trees, covering travel costs and subsistence.</p> <p>SWCWT is sustainable and almost entirely self-supportive.</p>

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<p>2.8 Benefit distribution rules</p>	<p>SWCWT does not trade goods and does not intend on doing so. All tangible benefits in terms of built structures and crafted objects are either made available to the community free of charge or retained by the crafter.</p>
<p>3. External linkages</p>	
<p>3.1 Partnerships and agreements</p>	<p>SWCWT has a good relationship with FCS, which manages the public forests adjoining Taliesin on three sides. SWCWT has contributed to preparing the management plan of Potterland Hill and supports management activities of FCS around the transition of the productive forest towards native woodland. Furthermore, SWCWT has permission to maintain a hazel coppice at Potterland Hill. SWCWT has an agreement with SNH around the wetland development initiative.</p> <p>Some trustees of SWCWT are also / have been on the board of Reforesting Scotland and the Scottish Wild</p>

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	Harvests Association, which function as important sources of information and inspiration for the group.
3.2 Associations	<p>SWCWT is a member of CWA.</p> <p>There is a partnership with the World Peace Prayer Centre at Allanton House, which results in mutual visits of events with an environmental theme (e.g., gardening, tree planting). There is also a connection with Lothlorien Community for those with mental health issues, in nearby Corsock. Clients from Lothlorien often attend courses at Taliesin and visit the woodland. A similar connection exists with Loch Arthur Camphill Community in Beeswing, which accommodates people with learning difficulties.</p>
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest/ woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taliesin is a 9 ha woodland site, which is situated on a relatively flat area of land at the foot of Screel Hill. Taliesin is situated near the villages of Dalbeattie and Castle Douglas. • The woodland can be accessed from the C15 between the village of Gelston and the A711 coastal road along which a small visitor parking can be found near the woodland entrance. The woodland has a good internal path network, which is regularly maintained to prevent overgrowth and waterlogging. • The soil in Taliesin is largely composed of glacial rubble deposited after the last Ice Age. The soil (from top to bottom) is made up of topsoil, sharp stones and gravel in sandy clay and finer clay with larger stones. • The woodland comprises only native species: Birch, elm, alder, ash, sycamore, oak, hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan, willow, hazel, osier, elder, beech, cherry, crab apple, wild plum and gorse. One corner of the woodland is infested with Japanese knotweed. • Taliesin is a young woodland with the oldest trees dating back to 1996, when livestock grazing on the site ceased. Approximately half of all current trees were planted (between 1997 and 2004), with the remaining trees naturally regenerating.

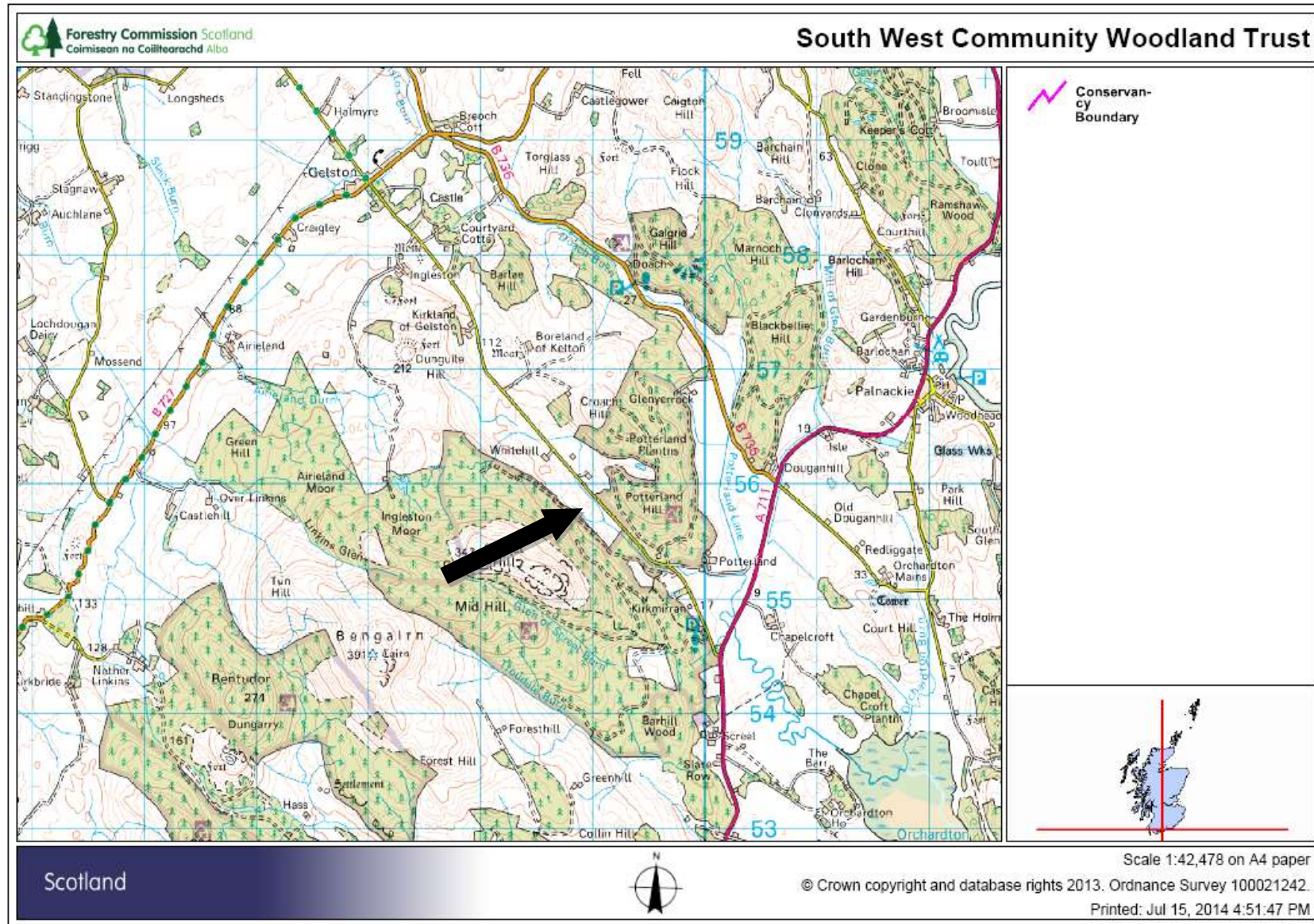
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of planted trees is about 2000 with some open spaces around structures, camping areas, the wetland, and at areas where soil conditions do not allow for tree growth. It is surrounded on three sides by densely planted conifer plantations (elements of which can be classified as ancient woodland - long established of plantation origin), two of which are slowly being converted into mixed and native woodland. • When acquired by the group, the woodland included two burns and one man-made pond from the early 1990s. The area to the south east of the main path was naturally boggy and has recently been turned into a wetland system with a series of channels, cascades, two ponds and a water meadow. This system connects to Potterland burn. A variety of timber structures, all erected by SWCWT, can be found spread out through the woodland. These include two log cabins connected by a large pole, which occasionally functions as a frame for a canvas, a swing, a peace pole, a totem pole, an element of constantly changing ephemeral woodland art, a bridge, a kiln (clay oven) and a thatched compost toilet with running water. On one side the woodland is bordered by a recently renovated dry stone dyke. • Classification of woodland type: Broadleaved • Before group involvement, the site was privately owned and used primarily for temporary livestock accommodation and grazing. • Tree planting and wetland development have greatly benefited biodiversity. The area attracts a variety of birdlife, damselflies, dragonflies and butterflies, as well as lizards, tadpoles, toads, trout, frogs, newts, adders, red squirrels, and deer. Surveys are regularly undertaken but are not commissioned by the SWCWT. These have included flora and fauna, snails, wildflowers, and damsel- and dragonflies.
<p>4.2 Woodland and group funding sources</p>	<p>A total of £10,000 from the Big Lottery Awards for All fund was used towards woodland purchase, which was supplemented by additional fundraising (amounting to up to more than half of the purchase price). The Awards for All fund was also used towards funding materials for a children’s play in the woodland including and a forest xylophone. Furthermore, the group relied on a FCS grant for the purchase of woodland trees. Apart from these start-up grants, SWCWT is completely self-supporting.</p>

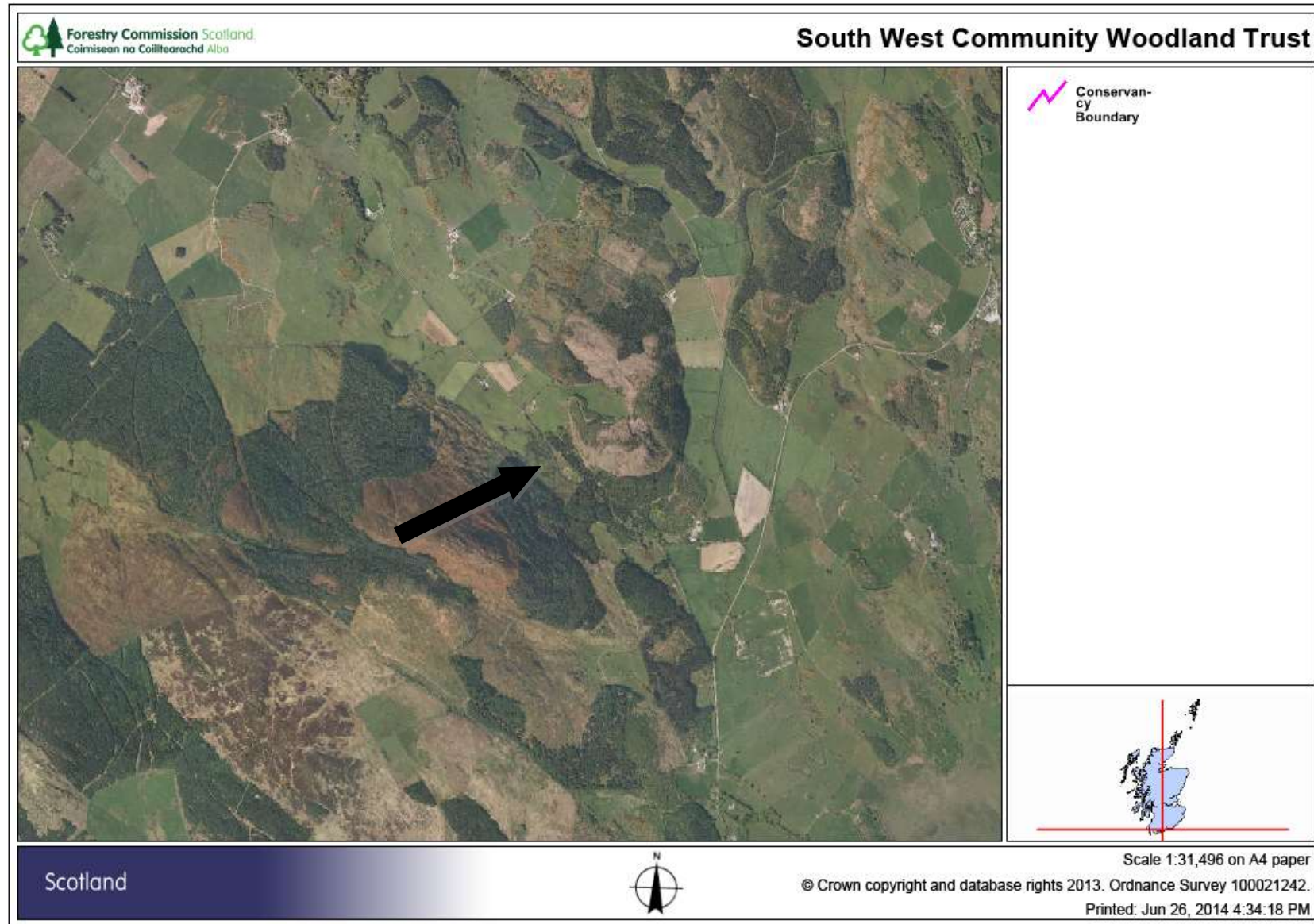
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4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital	<p>Taliesin is a magnet for people with crafting skills and those finding inspiration for their work in the natural environment.</p> <p>Trustees have skills and expertise in: Environmental consultancy, environmental education, wild food harvesting, project management, organizing community events, woodworking, pottery, glassmaking, thatching, horticulture, playing musical instruments, storytelling, landscape design, building timber structures, and more.</p>
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2. Change Narrative

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

The idea to start SWCWT started at the Annual Gathering of Reforesting Scotland (RS) in 1995. At that time the Millennium Forest project was being developed which would see funding from the Millennium Lottery fund and the Forestry Commission to plant a network of woodlands in partnership with local people, community groups, local authorities and environmental charities. Inspired by Borders Forest Trust operating in the Scottish Borders, two local attendees from Galloway asked a representative of RF for support in developing a community woodland movement in South-West Scotland. In response to this, the RF-representative organized a meeting with relevant attendants, relying on her experience of working with communities who wanted to become directly involved in land use using the Participatory Rural Appraisal technique.

This public meeting was held in Galloway and was attended by some of those who had come together earlier in response to proposals to bury nuclear waste in Galloway Forest Park. The owner of Taliesin at that time was invited as well. This resulted in the formation of a local voluntary association, named South West Community Woodlands (SWCW) in late 1995 (**informal enjoyment to group formation**). The idea was to develop an application for a Millennium Forest given the lack of applicants from this area. To take forward the Millennium Forest application, the group constituted themselves as South West Community Woodlands Trust (SWCWT) a couple of years later. This application included Taliesin as well as a number of other sites.

Initially, the group organized a few festival-style events at the woodland including workshops on green woodwork, basketry, pottery, sawmilling etc., which have continued ever since (**group formation to active engagement**). Following receipt of a grant by FCS, the group engaged in tree planting in local villages and along the river Urr between 1997 and 2004, thereby using Taliesin as their base with permission of the landowner (**active engagement to decision-making**). In considering the Millennium Forest application, SWCWT discovered that their ideas on what a community woodland should look and operate like were incompatible with the objectives of the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust. The group lacked the capacity to continue to engage in region-wide level of activity and was also put off by the high level of bureaucracy associated with the Millennium

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Forest project. In response to this, SWCWT decided to opt out of the bidding process and look for alternative ways of engaging in community forestry.

Around the same time, the local owner of Taliesin had decided to dispose of the land, which was subsequently purchased by a Trustee of SWCWT to ensure that Taliesin would remain in the custody of SWCWT. This allowed the group to become more centred on developing Taliesin as an ecological and social resource and started the development of partnership working with FCS, immediate surroundings and communities. Eventually, the group managed to purchase Taliesin after successfully applying to the Big Lottery Awards for All grant in 2008 (**decision-making to full management**). This ensures that the land will remain in charitable use. The group has been very successful in organizing a wide variety of workshops on woodland-related crafts. In addition, there are currently four main events each year, which include sleepovers in the woodland.

Besides managing Taliesin as a community woodland, SWCWT has also developed outreach activities. It has trained Forest School teachers to run events for Auchencairn and Gelston schools at Taliesin. Furthermore, it runs an Orchard and Wild Harvest project since 2009. This project is aimed at planting fruit trees with community groups and in local schools throughout the region.

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

Facilitating factors

- **The support by an RS-representative in facilitating group development** using the innovative Participatory Rural Appraisal technique was crucial to the subsequent sense of ownership and commitment by everyone involved.
- **The horizontal organization of the group**, which has made it easy for people to develop their own initiatives as long as they take the lead themselves and do not harm the environment.
- **A small group of about five inventive and highly motivated 'champions'**. This group regularly comes up with new ideas, have the expertise to carry out their proposals, are passionate and take the lead/responsibility of carrying out

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these activities. A good example is the development of the waterways, which was designed by one and managed by another of the Trustees.

- **Group members have a broad range of woodland-related skills.** This is partly through being active in organisations such as Reforesting Scotland, Camphill Scotland and the Scottish Wild Harvests Association. As a result, SWCWT is able to run a variety of events and workshops without needing to fund a trainer.
- **CWA-membership has been instrumental in advertising events and engaging in knowledge exchange** around best practice. For example, SWCWT has checked with other community woodland groups how best to deal with complaints from neighbouring landowners regarding noise caused by woodland parties. Since measures have been introduced (i.e., putting up signs at the woodland entrances explaining that amplified music is prohibited and that all parties require prior approval from SWCWT by means of a risk assessment), the number of parties and complaints have dropped.

Barriers and Challenges

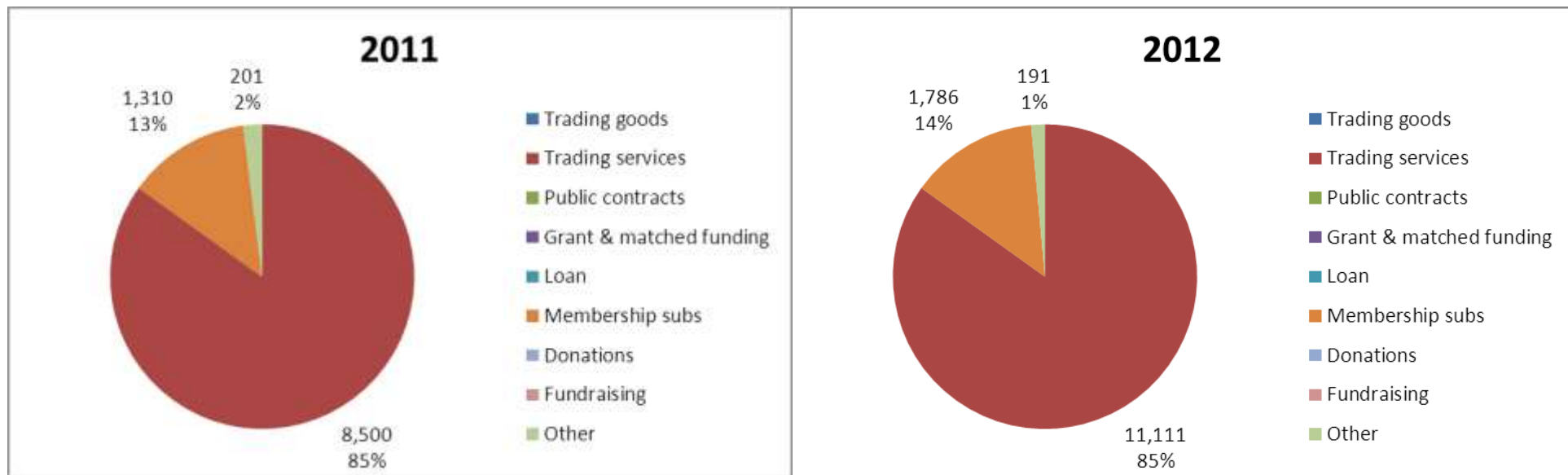
- The group experiences **difficulties in recruiting new Trustees.** As a result, there has been little to no succession of Trustees in the past few years. To ensure the sustainability of the group, SWCWT would like to involve young people in the role of trainee Trustee, but it has not yet been successful in achieving this. The group has observed that despite engagement of young people with the site for camp-outs and parties, they typically do not show interest in joining the board because of limited time and a reluctance to take on responsibility.
- **The increasing cost of insurance.** The SWCWT has dealt with this by increasing the membership fee.
- **The requirement by many funding bodies to detail a project proposal in line with pre-specified guidelines.** Group members perceive this as limiting and prefer to have freedom around decision-making. For that reason, SWCWT has chosen to be entirely self-supporting after the woodland was acquired. This requires a high volume of activities and events to raise sufficient funds to cover expenses.
- **Dealing with invasive non-native species.** Japanese knotweed has infested an area of the woodland as a result of locals dumping garden waste near the roadside. The group aims to control this using non-chemical means such as by bashing, transplanting trees to shade out the weed and covering it with black plastic and old carpet.

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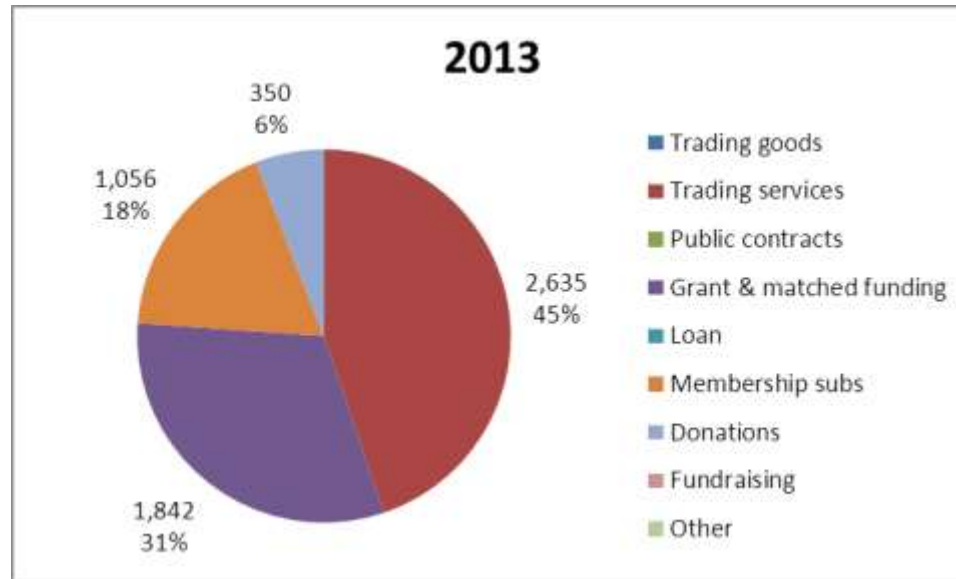
- **Difficulties in motivating volunteers to work according to a strict management plan.** As a result, woodland management tends to be reactive as opposed to proactive.

3. Evolution of income streams

When comparing the 2011 and 2012 accounts with those of 2013 and 2014, a number of observations can be made: (1) membership subscriptions consistently account for 10-20% of income. (2) income from trading services has declined, and (3) grant funding and donations have emerged as sources of income in the past two years. Income from trading services has fallen due to the decision to stop providing paid courses by external trainers during the 2012 financial year. Instead, the group chose to organize and run any courses and events themselves. As a result of suggesting donations instead of a fixed payment for these activities, donations emerge as a source of income from 2013 onward. The income from trading services that remains in 2013 is gained through the Orchard and Wild Harvest project.



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

The site has long been considered poor land, not worth any effort to 'improve' it for agricultural purposes. It has probably been grazed by livestock and cut over for firewood since the early days of human settlement, but has suffered little other degradation in the suite of natural organisms since the last glacial period. It is thus unusually rich in natural biodiversity.

The site continued to be used for agricultural purposes until about 1996 when a local person, interested in building a private house and planting woodland, purchased Taliesin. Following acquisition, he was involved in the discussions around starting a community woodland group to access Millennium Forest Trust funding. This group organized themselves as SWCWT and was initially engaged in tree planting in the villages of Corsock and Lothlorian and along the river Urr to create a wildlife corridor from the woodland (watershed) to the sea. Thereby, they used Taliesin as their base. Eventually, the owner of Taliesin changed

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his mind about settling in Taliesin and decided to sell the land plot. In order to sustain it as a community woodland in the short run it was purchased by an SWCWT Trustee. After tree planting had been completed, the woodland was sold off to SWCWT to ensure its future as a community woodland.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
	Local family	Livestock accommodation		
1996	Local person	To build a private home and plant a woodland	Upper pond dug	Right to roam

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

Since SWCWT involvement, livestock grazing has ceased, allowing for natural regeneration of trees. In addition, about 2000 trees have been planted, which are now largely at 'closed canopy' status. This has been done with biodiversity in mind and with a focus on native species. SWCWT has also developed a wetland area and maintains this (e.g., clearing overgrown ponds). These measures have resulted in wide scale natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and vascular plants – wildflowers and weeds.

Moreover, thanks to SWCWT involvement, the woodland plantation at Potterland Hill is being gradually transformed into native woodland. This is done through felling non-native trees and thinning of birch, while planting native tree species. SWCWT is also re-establishing the hazel coppice rotation at Potterland, which enables the group to use the stems for various crafting purposes.

Furthermore, SWCWT engages and educates the community about the natural environment. They have done so and continue to do so through a wide variety of events and workshops. These include but are not limited to: Stone carving, wood carving, wild herb forage, children's activities (e.g., shelter building), rug making, grafting, coppicing, dry stone dyke maintenance and rebuilding, knitting and crocheting, carving crochet hook and knitting needles, broom making, sheep fleece rug making, music &

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drama, musical instrument making, spoon carving and whittling, wild mushroom and food forays, basket making, bushcraft, paper making, coracle making, coffin making, stool making, lantern making, and bow making.

In addition, SWCWT paid for the training of Forest School teachers to educate local school children about the natural environment. Forest School is organized in May and June twice weekly. Furthermore, the Orchard and Wild Harvest project has been developed under the auspices of SWCWT to reduce carbon emissions and improve the health and well-being of local people.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2000	Local person (SWCWT trustee)	To create/sustain the community woodland	Tree planting	Right to roam
2008	SWCWT	To sustain the community woodland	Constructing visitor facilities and wetland development	Land Reform Act

6. Future Plans

Woodland management is often reactive and relies on the initiative of people to work upon their ideas. Therefore, it is not easy to predict how Taliesin will develop in the future. Nonetheless, it is evident that the log cabins need to be renovated within the near future and there is also a plan to create a 'living bridge' across the Potterland burn by poking the roots of trees to grow across the waterway.

With the 20th anniversary of SWCWT coming up in 2016, there are also plans to organize an SWCWT archive to be displayed at village halls and for inspiration to like-minded groups. The group is considering applying for grant funding to fund someone to do this.

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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)
1995	Public meeting to discuss a Millennium Forest in Galloway	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To apply for Millennium Forest funding towards tree planting and community involvement			
1997-2004	Tree planting in various locations	GROUP FORMATION to ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	To increase biodiversity and amenity value of the region		Increased biodiversity (local knowledge)	
2000	Woodland purchase by Trust member	ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT to DECISION MAKING	To sustain the community woodland		Increased biodiversity (local knowledge)	

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2008	Woodland purchase by SWCWT	DECISION MAKING to FULL MANAGEMENT	To sustain the community woodland	Increased well-being, knowledge and skills exchange (regular forest school, events and workshops)	Increased biodiversity (local knowledge)	Income from membership fees, events and workshops
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