

A photograph of a forest path leading to a wooden viewing platform. The path is made of dark gravel and is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The platform is a simple wooden structure with a railing, situated in the middle of the path. The background is filled with dense green trees, creating a sense of a deep woodland.

# Friends of Jubilee Wood Scottish Borders, Scotland

*Small urban community woodland thrived for 17 years before group closed*

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](http://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.

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## 1. Group profile

**Woodland: Jubilee Wood**  
**Map ref: NT255394**  
**Webpage: none**  
**Date of profile: October 2013**  
**Resources: interviews with former committee members**  
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<b>1. Institutional context (in 2012)</b>	
<b>1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)</b>	<p>A private estate owns Jubilee Wood. It was managed by Friends of Jubilee Wood (FoJW) through a formal agreement with the private estate and Scottish Borders Council.</p> <p><b>Classification of tenure: Formal agreement (private)</b></p>
<b>1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)</b>	<p>Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) is guaranteed by the Land Reform Act.</p>
<b>1.3 Regulations/responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)</b>	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&amp;S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard. The most significant of these has been responsibility for the safety of the trees. Much of the work of FoJW has related to insurance, annual inspections and the consequences of two trees falling on neighbouring fences.</p>

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<b>2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise</b>	
<b>2.1 Group members, representation and decision making</b>	Anyone could join the group (it was not geographically limited). At its height there were 80 members; by the final year 'only about a dozen'. A core group was active and included the Convenor, and 4-5 other local residents, as well as the manager of the volunteers, and a representative of Borders Forest Trust. The committee struggled to attract wider involvement. A subscription fee of £2 was charged.
<b>2.2 Communication and learning processes</b>	An occasional newsletter was circulated to members. The Convenor provided informative and entertaining reports at each AGM, which are a rich source of documented experience.
<b>2.3 Structure and legal status</b>	The group was constituted as 'Friends of Jubilee Wood' in 1995. This formalisation brought the capacity to manage funds.  <b>Classification of legal form: Unincorporated Association</b>
<b>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</b>	As an unincorporated association FoJW was required to have directors and hold an annual general meeting.
<b>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</b>	The main objective of the woodland management was to provide a nice place for people to walk through, and a venue for outdoor education activities. From inception the group maintained a management plan which was updated at 5-yearly intervals, compiled with assistance from Borders Forest Trust. Initial management required the group to fell a significant number of mature trees to secure the safety of the woodland, although this did not change the character of the woodland as being mature. Grants were obtained to do this, renew fencing and to initiate the renewal of the woodland with the planting of several hundred trees. Beyond this there was no intention to manage productively or extract anything from the woodland.

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	<b>Overall aim of plan: Public access and recreation</b>
<b>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</b>	<p>The main woodland management activities were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. tree planting, which was carried out by members of the group and other volunteers;</li> <li>2. felling or pruning of potentially dangerous trees, which was carried out by professional contractors. Funds for this were secured through grant applications</li> <li>3. clearing and maintaining drains and pathways</li> </ol>
<b>2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability</b>	<p>The group relied on grants as and when needed. Committee members worked very hard to apply for grants for specific activities but there were no paid staff. One of the most challenging issues towards the end of the group's existence was the search for routine management funds, and funds to cover insurance.</p> <p>At time of maximum membership, income from membership fees was about £160 / year. All other income consisted of grants for specific activities. Some tree seedlings were donated.</p>
<b>2.8 Benefit distribution rules</b>	All benefits were (and are) public goods.
<b>3. External linkages</b>	
<b>3.1 Partnerships and agreements</b>	The group was affiliated to Borders Forest Trust (BFT), and this was experienced as a very significant benefit, both because of BFT's experience with community woodlands and legal issues, and because BFT provided an umbrella for insurance.
<b>3.2 Associations</b>	Compared with groups which have started more recently FoJW was not proactive in national networking however it was a regular and full participant in a series of initiatives run by BFT to create forums for community woodlands in the Borders. One reason for this is that it was more in the vanguard and self-sufficient: they secured a series of grants to maintain and renew the wood, they had a supply of tools from our founding partnership with Tweeddale Countryside Volunteers, they had set up management plans, they had been proactive in setting up annual appraisals and acting upon them. Individual members did visit Wooplaw (the first

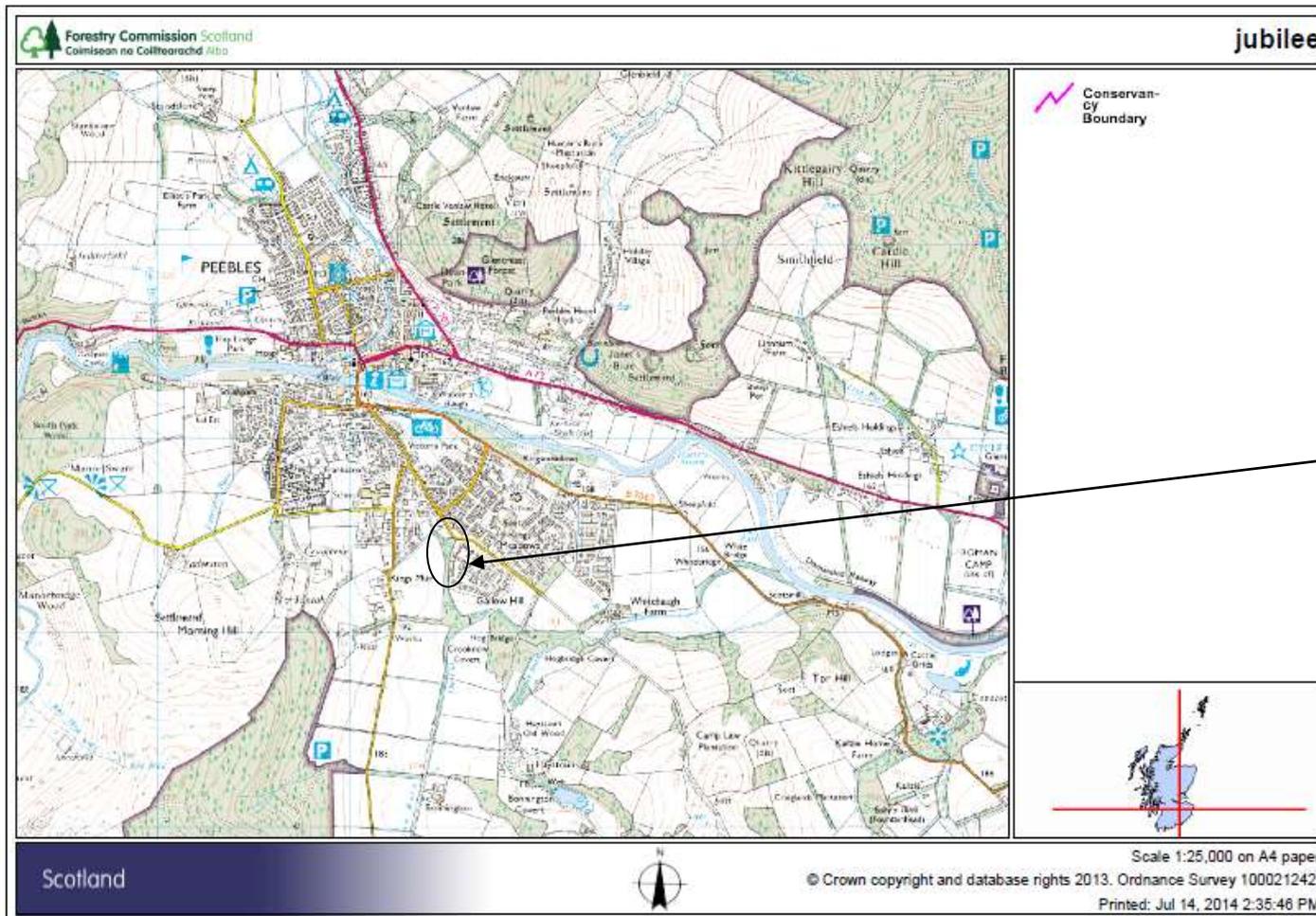
	<p>community owned woodland in Scotland) but exchanging experiences was not a priority. Over its lifetime, the group shared experience and offered advice to all when asked, primarily locally, e.g. advised Innerleithen Community Council, other woodland groups in Peebles, and a further initiative in Biggar. Members felt that 'there was plenty to be getting on with'. It failed to establish any standing or two-way communication with the planning authority, Borders Regional Council and its successor Scottish Borders Council, despite its relevant experiences as an early Community Woodland group in an urban area, proactive consideration of potential developments in the area, and regular responses to such things as Local Plans.</p>
<h4>4. Resources</h4>	
<h4>4.1 Forest/woodland</h4>	<p><b>Describe the forest/woodland.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Size</b> – 1 hectare</li> <li>• <b>Location</b> – south of the River Tweed, and south of the centre of Peebles (a town of 9,000 people), adjacent to two new housing developments</li> <li>• <b>Access</b> – Its location and shape mean that it is well used as a public path between housing developments, and for recreational / dog walking use. Access is legally open to all, and physically easy with no gates or stiles. The path surfaces vary but are superior to those of adjoining woodland.</li> <li>• <b>Soil type and site potential</b> - The site is prone to flooding when drains block.</li> <li>• <b>Species mix</b> – a mixture of mature beech, spruce, one douglas fir, ash; and recently (within last 10 years) planting of oak and ash</li> <li>• <b>Features:</b> combines a range of habitats in a very small area – burns (streams), boggy areas, and a mix of species.</li> <li>• <b>Classification of woodland type: Mixed</b></li> <li>• <b>Outline management history</b> - Felling and severe pruning of diseased and potentially dangerous trees</li> </ul>

# Friends of Jubilee Wood

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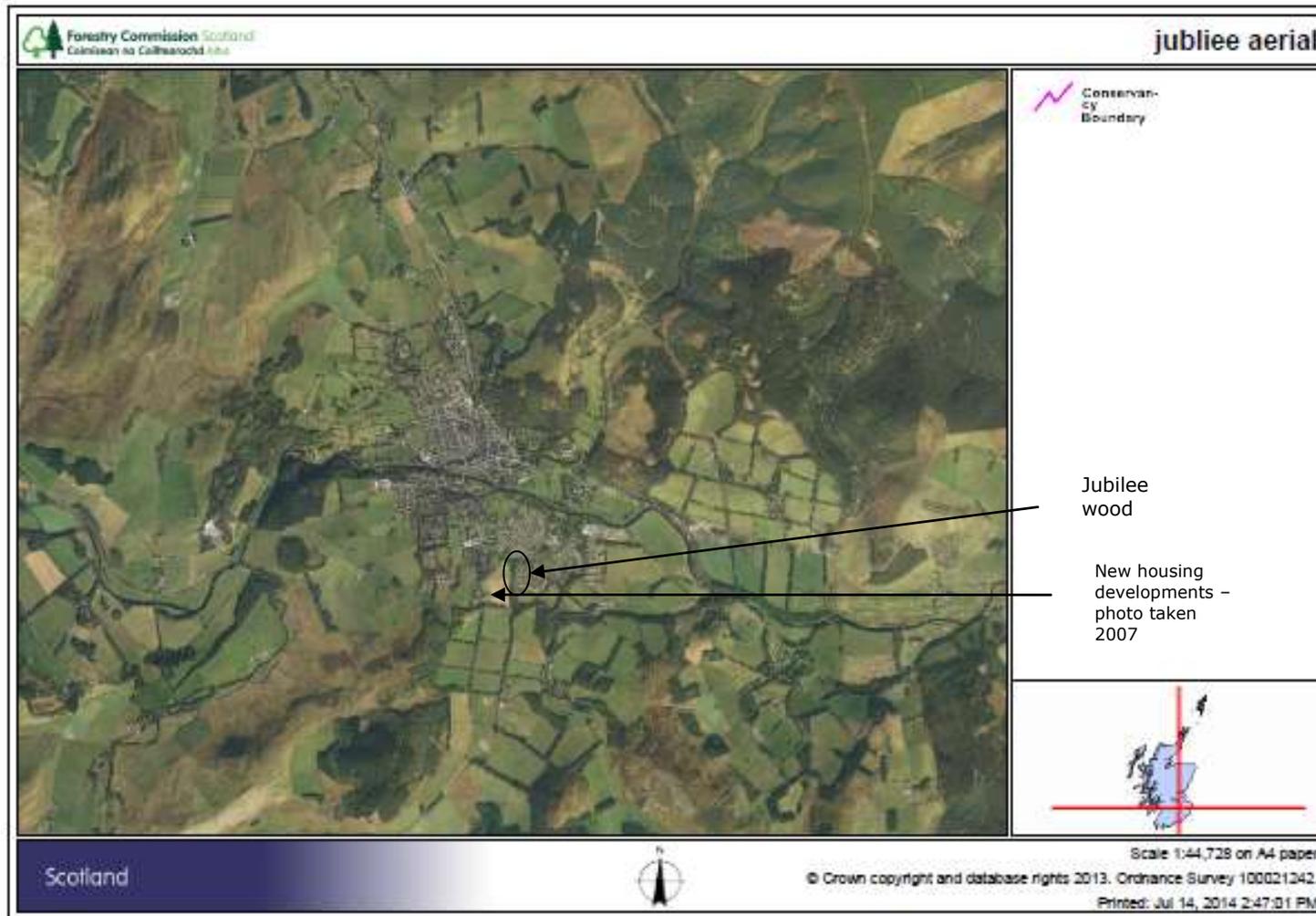
	<p>in the late 1990s particularly near the boundaries with housing developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>General condition of woodland</b> – well cared for by community group, but concerns about potentially dangerous trees</li><li>• <b>Biodiversity</b>– described by the Borders Forest Trust as having ‘an interesting ground flora, with a small selection of species which indicate the woodland has ancient origins.’</li></ul>
<b>4.2 Woodland and group funding sources</b>	A wide range of grants was sourced included Millennium Forest for Scotland, Scottish Woodland Grants Scheme, Paths for All. Funding availability declined over the lifespan of FoJW.
<b>4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital</b>	The group drew on skills and expertise of its own members. Professional advice was important in evaluating the condition of the trees on an annual basis.

# Friends of Jubilee Wood



**Jubilee Wood**  
Note that new housing developments adjacent to the wood are not shown on this map

# Friends of Jubilee Wood



## 2. Change Narrative

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

The recent history of this wood is one of changing ownership and responsibilities. Originally part of Haystoun Estate, it was given to the Borders Regional Council by Colonel Sprott, who was owner of the Haystoun Estate, to mark the 1977 Silver Jubilee. It remained in the possession of the regional council until about 1990, when rot was discovered in large beech trees and the wood was considered unsafe for the public. The regional council realised they did not have the money to pay for having the trees cut down and so they gave the wood back to the estate. By that time ownership had passed to Col. Sprott's niece and her husband. They declared that the wood was not open to the public; however local people continued to use it. The wood had a tendency to become flooded because the drains got blocked with leaves and sticks.

Members of the community approached the community council in 1993 to see whether they could do something about it. The community council started talking to the estate, who in principle were quite willing to lease it to the community council, but wanted the council to solve the problems of diseased trees and flooding. At this stage a local group, Friends of Jubilee Wood, was formed by the various people interested (**informal enjoyment to group formation**). It was formed to explore the opportunity of creating a community woodland, an idea which was quite new at that time

After two years of negotiations, the community council, together with FoJW, succeeded in making a management agreement with the estate to take over the management of the wood (**group formation to full management**). They involved the local voluntary group, Tweeddale Countryside Volunteers, to do work in the wood and money was raised from UK 2000 and Shell Better Britain. After that agreement was made, quite a lot of work was put into the wood: the rotten trees were removed by a contractor, the paths were improved with new stones and drains were dug out. Membership numbers increased to about 80 in the mid 2000s. The former convenor sees this period (2002-8) as the 'golden age' when membership was high, grants were accessible and the group was supported by Borders Forest Trust.

The group continued in the same form until 2012, by which time the core group had diminished and a few core members were bearing a lot of strain. The cumulative effect of fundraising effort, small claims court cases over fallen trees, difficult

engagement with planners, worries about continuing potential further impacts on neighbouring property, and the effects of extreme weather, led the group to decide to close (**full management** to **informal enjoyment**).

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

### Facilitating factors

The group was founded at a time when there were few community woodlands. As one former member said, 'The 90s was the big era for starting these sort of projects partly because there were funds, there was the Millennium Fund and everyone hoped to get something.'

Two factors helped the group establish and grow: the **skills and knowledge** of members of the group, and **support from Borders Forest Trust (BFT)**, however Tweeddale District Council (now no longer in existence) played an important role in the very initial stages by undertaking to provide insurance. Collectively, members of the group had specialist knowledge in woodland ecology, volunteer engagement, and fundraising. Initially the group found the expertise of BFT staff helpful in structuring their plans and activities, because it was based on experience from other sites. 'I'm not saying that they did everything because it wasn't the way but somehow, an organisation like that has avenues which are not necessarily immediately obvious but suddenly just that little bit of help of doing something ... it was just that someone who knew something about it, had some experience, someone from outside was wanting to help us and was taking an interest.' 'They had people who knew about trees, they had that expertise and knowledge that gave you the confidence that you could actually do this.'

Later when legal difficulties arose (see below) the knowledge, time and moral support of BFT staff were much appreciated by FoJW's members, and helped them to persevere in fending off claims for damage from windblow.

### Challenging factors

Many of the formative experiences have been struggles with bureaucracy, planning systems and litigation.

**Insurance** provided an initial challenge. Group members approached the district council, Tweeddale District Council [no longer in existence]: 'we were a group of inexpert civilians really, totally unused to this; we didn't really know who to ask about insurance - the one or two enquiries we did ask, really scared us' because insurance companies were unused to such inquiries for public liability insurance from small scale woodlands and provided unfeasibly high quotations (e.g. £1,500 annually). The District Council agreed to act as insurers for the wood. So a three-way arrangement was set up with the community council leasing the wood, FoJW managing it, and the District Council insuring it. An agreement was drawn up by a lawyer to formalise this.

Insurance continued to cause a great deal of worry, and many early meetings started with insurance discussions. Furthermore, when local government was reorganised, district councils were eliminated. The group was not informed that the new Scottish Borders Council had not taken on the responsibility for insuring the wood. The anomaly was only discovered when a tree fell on a car. The council absorbed the costs but a new solution had to be found. By the late 1990s the group was handling the insurance themselves, feeling more confident. A key decision was to **affiliate with the Borders Forest Trust** which was forming at about the same time as FoJW. 'The subscription was pretty low and we thought we would certainly get some use from it, which we indeed did and so we decided unanimously and quite quickly that we would.' BFT provided low cost insurance and their staff did the paperwork, which was perceived as a considerable benefit for FoJW.

Two key stages in evolution (increasing challenge to group management) were **new housing developments adjacent to the wood**; and a **storm during which an ash tree fell on the fence of an adjacent property**. This was a traumatic experience for several people. The owner of the fence sued for £1,000 to restore the damage, and adopted a hostile attitude to group members and volunteers. Again BFT membership proved its worth, as BFT took on court representation. The neighbour dropped the case but it had created considerable stress for the group members. At this stage, affiliation with BFT became particularly significant. They 'were very helpful over this law suit business' and 'fronted our legal efforts'.

Windthrow was a new problem, linked to adjacent housing developments. These involved the felling of a shelter belt, which allowed winds to buffet Jubilee Wood in a way that they had not done so previously. The members of the group **engaged strenuously with the planning process** but their experience was that the planners in Scottish Borders Council were not

interested in their views and expertise. 'In their local plan, they have words about encouraging local woods, when it comes to doing things on the ground, they just didn't want to know.'

In deciding to end FoJW, one committee member reflected that it had been particularly stressful for the Chair, who 'put far more effort into it than anyone else, a vast amount of paperwork and writing to the council and writing to Forestry Commission, all sorts of problems.' The experience has tested relationships between community groups and Local Authorities. Members of FoJW felt that a more supportive attitude could have made a big difference, and that the planning department did not communicate effectively with the tree team in Scottish Borders Council.

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### **3. Evolution of income streams**

Income was derived almost entirely from grants, which were sought according to need and availability. In the early years of FoJW, grants were more easily won, in the period of Millennium Forest for Scotland which provided financial support to BFT to enable it to support community woodlands. Early grants helped to manage the flooding problem, and to fell dangerous trees; later Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme money was awarded to plant broadleaves, and Awards for All grants were used to improve the pathways through the wood. In the years after initial improvement works, funding support became less scarce and less suited to the needs of the group; like many other groups they found it challenging to raise funds for maintenance and routine management rather than for new work. Committee members felt disappointed that the FCS Woods in and Around Towns scheme focused more on initiation than on maintenance of projects, for example. Overall, the running costs (such as annual tree safety inspections) exceeded income towards the end of FoJW's time, and this was a factor in deciding to fold up the group.

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

The woodland was given by Haystoun to the educational department of Borders Regional Council (now the Scottish Borders Council), on the occasion of the Queen's Silver Jubilee (1977). After some time, the Council understood that the woodland included 'dangerous trees' upon which they returned it to the estate. During that time a number of local people had got grown

quite fond of the wood and wanted to maintain access. While owned by Borders Regional Council the objectives were educational. There is no record of management objectives while in private ownership.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
Until 1977	Private estate	Unknown	Unknown	No official access.
1977- c.1990	Borders Regional Council	Educational (according to interviews with former FoJW members)	None. Discovery of dangerous trees resulted in return of gift to previous owners	Public access
c.1990- 1993	Private estate	Unknown	Unknown	No official access.

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

Initially the group knew little about managing trees. After linking up with Borders Forest Trust, they felt that they benefited from people with expertise in trees, which gave them the confidence that they could manage the woodland. After that agreement was made, quite a lot of work was put into the wood: the rotten trees were removed by a contractor, the paths were improved with new stones and drains were dug out. The decision to plant new trees was made because there were gaps where the beeches had come down, and a rather open edge towards the field where new houses were planned, so the group wanted to screen the wood, to make it feel less urban and more like a wood.

Other changes in the wood have resulted from community engagement, through various events including a sculpture day, moth days and bat days (led by a committee member who was an ecologist).

The disbenefits of managing and using the wood are clearly the stress incurred by the management committee in dealing with insurance, planning and litigation. Some group members felt this is typical of urban woodland. In addition, with the adjacent housing developments, the costs of felling and tree surgery appeared to be escalating and there was no prospect of accessing grants for this and on-going management costs.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
1995-2012	Haystoun Estate (owner) / FoJW (manager)	Conservation and recreation (interviews)  Disbenefits of exhaustion, stress and loss of trust in council processes (interviews)	Felling diseased / potentially dangerous trees Planting native broadleaf trees Installing bird boxes and bat boxes Engaging with planners with regard to adjacent housing developments; engaging with neighbouring households over fallen trees	Land Reform Act (since 2003)

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## 6. Future Plans

The group disbanded in December 2012 and therefore has no future plans. The woodland remains in the ownership of Haystoun Estate.

### 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	FoJW was constituted	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To create and manage a community woodland (Woodland considered dangerous when trees identified as diseased)			
1995	Management agreement was signed with the owner and the Community Council	GROUP FORMATION to FULL MANAGEMENT	To improve the management of the woodland and enable public access	<p>Increased woodland use to 20 000 / year (visitor counters at all entrances to the wood)</p> <p>Well-being benefits (numbers of participants turning up for events)</p> <p>Negative impact on committee of stress and disillusionment</p>	<p>Safer woodland (evidence: records of removal of diseased trees)</p> <p>Greatly improved paths (interviews)</p> <p>Counteracted by increased risks, owing to adjacent housing developments</p>	No evidence

				(interviews; Convenor's annual reports)		
2012	The cumulative effect of fundraising effort, small claims court cases over fallen trees, difficult engagement with planners, and worries about potential conflicts with neighbours / the effects of extreme weather	FULL MANAGEMENT to INFORMAL ENJOYMENT	High levels of stress experienced by active members, financial challenges	No events held.  The wood continues to be well used as a pathway (direct observation, 2014).	No further tree falls (direct observation).	