



Community Woodland Association

Submission to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee for their consideration of Forestry and Woodland Management in Scotland.

A submission after the meeting of 15th January 2025 with points ordered as the conversation.

Targets and current schemes

Government schemes are complex and burdensome for community groups to access, Woodlands In and Around Towns is easier than Forestry Grant Scheme.

Re-emphasis of grants on biodiversity and sustainable woodland management.

At the moment it is often not worth small woods applying for sustainable management of forest grants due to small amounts paid and the time cost of making applications and submitting reports and claims.

The public register is not effective to enable communities to interact with forestry plans.

Incentives and targets should have a degree of detail and flexibility that is currently mostly lacking.

Planting scheme applications tend to underestimate the amount of archaeology, there is a need to reflect the importance of the historic landscape including policy woodlands.

National planting targets encourage large scale single age single species plantings. This can be the point on which communities object: the targets enable the conflict.

Economic

Economic gain is not usually a driver for community action however economics become a concern when communities want to manage sites.

Economic benefits can be locally significant. A CWA study showed that over 3 years 4 community woodland groups brought an aggregate of £1.1million in to their communities creating 27 FTE jobs. Very significant locally.

[Native Woods project — Community Woodlands Association](#)



Community / social

We believe that the history of community woodlands in Scotland demonstrates that communities are more than capable of professional standards of management, albeit support needed in some cases. Through community woodlands, communities are delivering benefits they determine for themselves.

Capacity (time not capability) is the biggest issue for community groups, communities would be helped by streamlined processes, reduced bureaucracy and increased resources both to them and to organisations that support.

We believe communities with real agency and control over their local space including forestry and woodland are best placed to determine and deliver benefits for themselves. This aligns well with the Community Wealth Building agenda; we believe that community woodland groups have been delivering CWB for years.

Environment

Community woodland management addresses local issues and delivers locally according to local priorities. This means that woodlands become more diverse according to local priorities and preferences and serves to deliver biodiversity benefits.

Evidence shows community management of woodland produces greater public goods, including biodiversity, than woodland managed by public sector. Work in press.

Management of woodlands, perhaps especially small woodlands is potentially in conflict with single species management eg hen harriers. Woodland management cannot be seen in isolation to the wider landscape.

Higher deer culls would be good for forest and woodland management and much of the rest of Scotland also. Support for the creation of venison markets would go a long way to encouraging greater culls especially at community level, benefiting both biodiversity and local economy.



Policy

Community access to land and woodland underpins activity and should be enabled so far as possible. Including increased use of mechanisms (lease/MoU) to enable community management of state forestry.

Engagement is not empowerment. Communities when consulted should have agency and real influence over outcomes. In our opinion the community engagement principles prepared by the Alliance to Save Scotland's Rainforest is the approach that best enables this.

[ASR+community+engagement+good+practice_FINAL.pdf](#)

We have come across a case recently where creation of a community woodland appears to have been written into planning conditions for a housing development without broad community consultation or agreement. Creating an issue for both developer and community! We do not believe that community woodlands should be regarded as compensation or mitigation for any form of development. The initiative should come from communities.

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