

Current approaches to supporting and working with communities on the National Forest Estate: feedback from community organisations and FES delivery staff



A report to the Community Engagement Health-Check Steering Group

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Executive summary

Purpose and method

1. In 2013 Forestry Commission Scotland established an independent advisory group to undertake a 'health check' study looking at what Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) has achieved in its work with local communities over the past ten years. To support this, Forest Research (FR) was commissioned to seek feedback on current FES approaches to supporting and working with communities.

2. The current study is based on discussion groups and interviews with representatives of community groups. These groups were invited by FES, based on a definition of community as "local people acting collectively to derive local benefits" and groups as constituted or un-constituted. The groups selected by FES extended beyond this definition, and included NGOs and woodland user groups as well as community woodland groups. There is a need for better classification and understanding of the types of groups who engage with FES.

3. The core of the study consists of the group discussions. It is these discussions which enable the researchers to test hypotheses and draw reliable conclusions, because within the groups participants discuss perceptions, compare experiences, and offer, validate or dispute patterns and explanations. These provide robust conclusions about the underlying factors, bottlenecks and apparent solutions.

Experiences with engagement

1. The experience of communities engaging with the FC is diverse and ranges from 'very good' to 'very poor'. Analysis suggests that three broad areas which affect this experience:

- Social: urban vs. rural – broadly, in urban areas the work of FES in improving woodland quality and access is valued, while in rural areas communities often aspire to more empowered engagement and this is widely seen to be falling short of expectations.
- Legal: informal vs. formal / legal agreements – difficulties arise when community groups want more control over forest land, and when legal or other formal agreements are required.
- Organisational: the forest district within which a community / woodland is located. Each district has its own culture and priorities, and this creates some sharp distinctions in the attitude to and support for CRT staff and community groups.

2. Community engagement is seen as a challenge for FES; whilst CRT staff experience considerable job satisfaction they find themselves not at the heart of organisation purpose, and in some districts their role is a low priority.
3. The most significant factor in affecting groups' experiences, mentioned repeatedly, is the shift from informal use agreements, to formal and especially legal agreements. Where formal contracts are involved, groups reported extreme delays, high levels of frustration and incomprehension, and abandonment of projects by community groups. This problem was recognised by both community groups and staff. These delays and frustrations include agreements on non-forest land, or for non-forest assets, but the extreme examples relate in particular to forested land.
4. Groups experience confusion about who is responsible in the FC for making decisions. Delays are often linked to the role of the land agent who has an increased work load, and is not always well prepared for the particular needs of community engagement.
5. Internal culture aggravates this. Community groups reported wide variability in staff competence and willingness to make engagement work. They often praised delivery staff but felt that they were unsupported by more senior staff did not pick up decisions that needed to be made. They noted disparities between forest districts, and a widespread failure to mainstream 'community engagement' as an organisational objective. The attitude of the FDM, and sometimes of other senior staff, is a key part of this internal culture and varies widely between districts.
6. Many of the community groups, especially those towards the more 'empowered' end of the FCS spectrum, struggle for time, volunteers, and resources. They feel that FES staff tended to overlook these challenges, and to forget that as volunteers they had other demands on their time.

Key options

1. Mainstream 'community engagement' values throughout FES, from Head Office to FDMs to delivery staff, and across functions, from Operations to Land Agents and CRT staff. Consider separating the 'community' function from 'recreation and tourism'. Establish community engagement champions at national level and in every district.
2. Extend training in engagement to all staff. Refresher training is helpful to existing CRT staff, and further training for some in CRT posts who may have been assigned to them unwillingly. Develop a consistent approach to reflection, learning from experience and sharing good practice.
3. Clarify the range of meanings of 'community engagement', develop a clear way of distinguishing between different types of groups and engagement, and agreements that are appropriate to each type.

4. Produce templates of the different types of agreements so that everyone knows what to expect, and develop a transparent process (including timeframe) for signing them off. Ensure all agreements are respected in the same way as a commercial contract would be.
5. Address the land agent role, and develop procedures and targets to drastically improve rates of agreements. Consider appointing a dedicated community land agent to process all agreements, contracts and leases.
6. Communicate more clearly to the 'outside world' about what FCS / FES are, what they do, and what kinds of roles the staff do. Invest in clearer communication about what FES can and can't do, what resources it has to achieve community engagement, and the limits to that.
7. Set up internal systems to help monitor community engagement, and ensure progress. Establish clear definitions of types of engagement and groups. Facilitate continuity when staff change, by establishing a record of interaction and agreements with each group, and a 'traffic light' system to monitor progress and prioritise actions.
8. Deal with all aspects of engagement as a coherent area of work, to include public engagement on forest design plans, user groups for recreational, health and well-being purposes, as well as the more tightly defined 'community groups'. Particularly in urban and more populated areas, recognise and acknowledge the value of the ranger service and importance of 'being seen in the woods' by communities.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and objective

In 2013 Forestry Commission Scotland established an independent advisory group to undertake a 'health check' study looking at what Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) has achieved in its work with local communities over the past ten years. The group's purpose is to identify and build on good practice to help FES managers to focus resources to deliver maximum benefit in future (for further information visit: <http://fcnotes/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/inf-d-9f7jzw>). The health check is focusing predominantly on evaluating how FES works with local people and communities on Scotland's National Forest Estate to deliver FES' Key Commitment:

We want to encourage local people to get involved with using and managing local Estate woodlands so we will actively engage with local communities and be open to work in partnership (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2013; p. 50)



To support this, Forest Research (FR) was commissioned to seek feedback on current FES approaches to supporting and working with communities. This work will feed into the considerations of the group and their report, due to be presented to the Chief Executive Officer of FES in summer 2014.

1.2. Definitions

The definition of community engagement was provided by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), informed by discussions with FR and the project steering group (Box 1). Each forest district (FD) was asked to provide a list of current groups they work / have a relationship with.

Box 1. Definition of community / local people and the associated activities, used by FCS in this study

A community in this case can be described as "local people acting collectively to derive local benefits". A community group can be constituted or un-constituted. Local [implies] that people live within a reasonable distance of the project site (e.g. community council ward /parish / within 20 miles). However, some communities of interest or identity could be from further a field e.g. urban based diversity groups.

The range of activity / projects covered by the health check would include all actions carried out on the Scotland's national forest estate by people covered by the description above.

Both engaged community groups and disengaged community groups were included in the research. Engaged groups were those who were engaging with FES in a positive way to achieve some form of community benefit related to the local woodland resource. The disengaged groups were those groups where engagement with FES had not gone well, had consequently stopped or stalled for reasons ranging from disagreement to waiting for a formal agreement to be signed.

In the event, the list included a wider range of groups than the original definition. Community groups in more urban areas were more likely to be taking part in activities organised by FES. One NGO was contracted by FCS to work with excluded young people. The sample therefore extends beyond the sense of 'local people acting collectively for local benefit'.

1.3. Methods

Evidence was collected using semi-structured interview guides, applied through group discussions and telephone interviews. These were supplemented with a scoring exercise, and a questionnaire to document background information about participants. More information is provided in Annex 1.

2. Who was included in the research?

2.1. Community groups

The sample of 'community groups' was drawn from the list provided by FES, and included a wide range of group type and purpose, covering heritage, recreation, environmental and rural development interests, and diversity in terms of group membership numbers, group organisation legal and constitutional form, urban and rural locations, and size / type of woodland. Some focused on woodlands, while for others this was one amongst other community activities. Some are NGOs working with FES to increase engagement with difficult-to-reach groups who would not traditionally have the capacity to organise themselves and engage directly.

To help in the analysis we distinguished between the following:

- *CWG [community woodland group]: a defined, constituted, not necessarily incorporated group owned by local people, working with one or more specific woodlands*
- *WUG [woodland user group]: a group of people, often from a wider catchment, who make use of services or facilities offered by FES*
- *NGO [non-government organisation]: facilitates volunteer engagement with a range of woodlands*
- *disengaged CWG*

Nevertheless it proved difficult for researchers, steering group and FCS to put clear boundaries around these types, and more specific analysis is not within the scope of this study.

The geographical spread of the community sample by District is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Community group sample by FES District

FES Forest District	Community group	NGO
Cowal & Trossachs	1	
Dumfries and Borders	2	1
Galloway	3	
Inverness, Ross & Skye	6	1
Lochaber	3	
Moray & Aberdeenshire	2	
North Highlands	1	
Scottish Lowlands	2	4
Tay	2	
West Argyll	0	
TOTAL	22	6

2.2. FES staff

The study included Community Recreation and Tourism (CRT) managers best placed to contribute to the group discussions, as selected by FES. Representation was sought from all of the Forest Districts, to maintain perspectives from a broad geographical spread and covering rural and urban contexts (Table 3). A total of 20 FES staff attended the group discussions and represented a range of different FES roles (Table 4). Three senior managers with national perspectives were also interviewed to provide context, but are not included in the analysis of delivery staff's views below.

Table 2. FES staff sample by Forest District

FES staff District	Number
Cowal & Trossachs	1
Dumfries and Borders	1
Galloway	2
Inverness, Ross & Skye	2
Lochaber	3
Moray & Aberdeenshire	2
North Highlands	2
Scottish Lowlands	4
Tay	2
West Argyll	1
TOTAL	20

Table 3. FES staff sample by role

FES Role	Number
Beat Forester	2
Community and Education Ranger	1
Community Engagement Ranger	1
Community Project Manager	1
Conservation Forester	1
CRT Forester	1
CRT Manager	4
CRT Ranger	2
District Forester	2
Estates Project Manager	1
Recreation Contract Manager	1
Recreation Forester	1
Recreation Ranger	1
Woodland Community Officer	1
TOTAL	20

CRT = Community, Recreation and Tourism

3. Findings

3.1. Overview

In this section we organise the findings thematically, and illustrate points made by participants through anonymous quotations. In the next section (4 – Issues and Options) we summarise the strengths and weaknesses of FES’s community engagement, and options based both on suggestions from participants and on our own analysis.

3.2. Types of engagement

3.2.1. Overview

The spectrum of engagement promoted internally by FCS is shown in Figure 1, and ranges from informing and consulting, to supporting community management and ownership. The research tools used this spectrum of engagement to guide the terminology and concepts used.

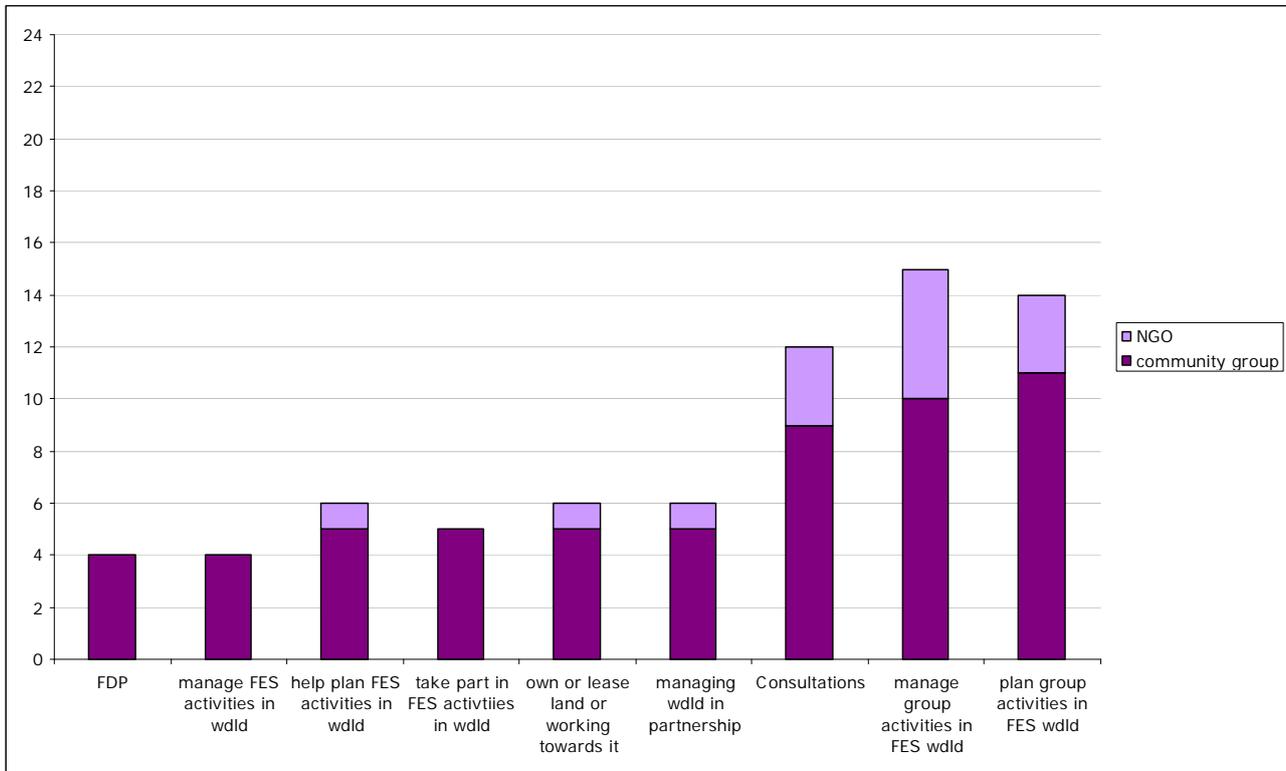
Figure 1. The spectrum of engagement promoted by FCS

	Inform	Consult	Involve			Partnership (Collaborate)	Empower (Control)	
			Taking part (e.g. events)	Helping plan	Helping manage		Lease	Ownership
Forest management plan	←→							
Health improvement activities e.g. health walks			←→					
Learning activities e.g. Forest School			←→					
Volunteering			←→					
Community woodland			←→					
Community-based business						←→		

Adapted from Forestry Commission Scotland website.

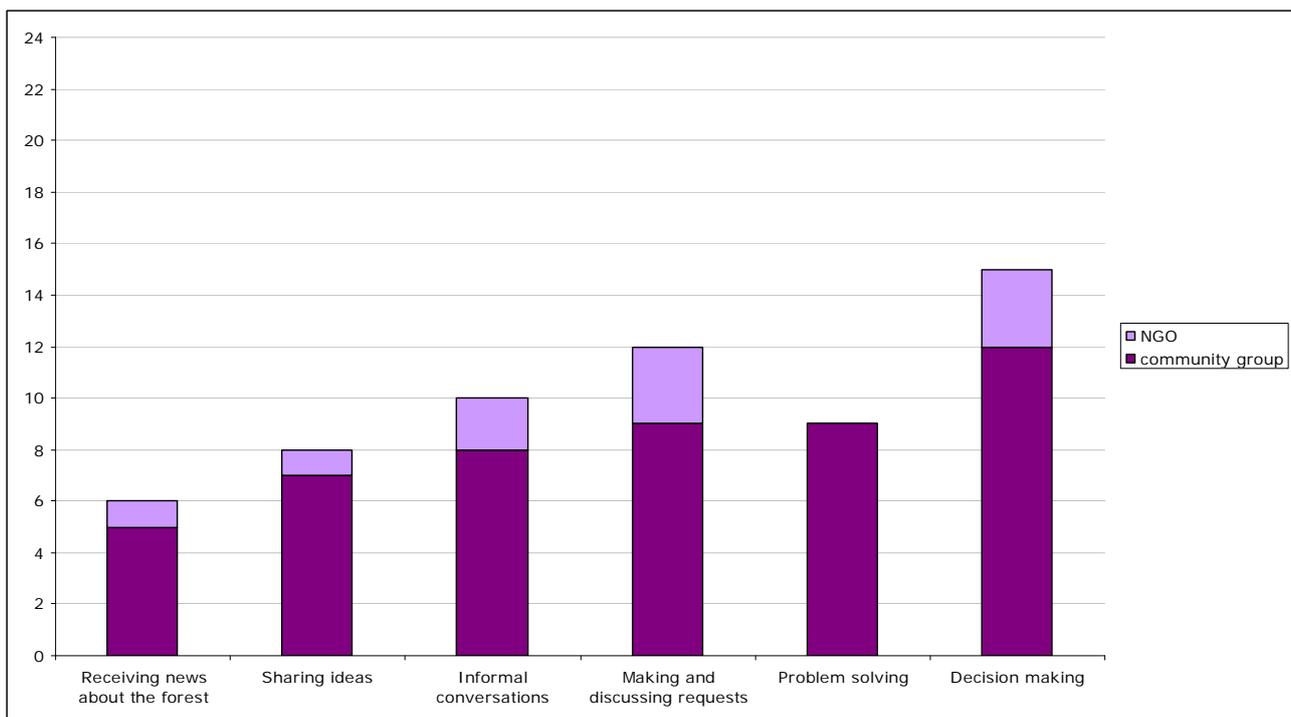
The participant information sheets asked respondents about types of engagement with FES. As Figure 2 shows, the community representatives are mostly planning (14/25) and managing (15/25) group activities in FES woodland, i.e. at the ‘involved’ level of engagement. When asked for more information about why they met with FES staff (Figure 3), more than half (15/24) were doing so to engage in decision making, or (12/24) making and discussing community requests with FES.

Figure 2. What kinds of activities do you take part in with FES (n=25)?



NB. Community representatives were able to indicate more than one kind of activity. FDP = Forest Design Plan. See Annex 5 for clarification of the questions asked.

Figure 3. Why do you meet with FES (n=24)?



NB. Community representatives were able to indicate more than one reason

In the next sections we comment briefly on aspects of these modes of engagement reflected in the interviews. The focus of the research was on the middle part of the spectrum, on involving and collaborating, but the divisions between types of engagement were not necessarily experienced by participants, who also wanted to comment on consultations, and on attempts to lease or buy forest from the National Forest Estate.

3.2.2. Informing and consulting

Consultations on Forest Design Plans (FDP) are firmly linked to the issue of community engagement, in the minds of many respondents, and are therefore relevant to this report. Community representatives several times expressed frustration about who was or was not invited to a consultation event, particularly if they were members of a recognised stakeholder group such as a community council or forest user group.

It's pretty hit and miss whether we get invited [WUG]

One or two also expressed frustration about the implementation of the plan.

One participant from a disengaged CWG felt that consultations had become less accessible. He reported that a recent consultation in his area in the Highlands was carried out online and via post only, and was not advertised in the local community newspaper.

In another example from the Highlands, a CWG felt that they had been let down by being offered only consultation, as a weak form of engagement.

Our 'partnership' is not a partnership. It's a forum for consultation (CWG)

3.2.3. Involving

Much of the engagement reported and discussed in the Stirling discussion groups, which represented more urban areas, matched the 'involving' mode of engagement. Some participants felt that this was underemphasised in the Health Check, and that there was a risk of groups taking up disproportionate time and attention:

Events, education, enjoyment, all these people enjoy the forest and the FC offer, and we need to recognise this as part of engagement because there are so many of those people who enjoy and appreciate what we do.

Not all people want to join a group they should be given equal consideration in this review.

'Community engagement' means formally engaging ... how many times do you formally engage with a dog walker.

3.2.4. Collaboration

Apart from this emphasis in the Stirling workshop, the majority of the engagement discussed in this study matches the 'collaborating' mode, in line with the objectives of the study. As such, the rest of this report highlights a number of difficulties experienced specifically with the collaborative mode of engagement.

3.2.5. Empowerment

Empowerment, in the context of the FES spectrum (Figure 1), relates to the shift to community leasing or owning of land from the National Forest Estate (NFE). Within the remit of this report, the focus is on how FES facilitates the transition to this end of the engagement spectrum. This was not a significant component of the study but a few relevant points were made.

When National Forest Land is advertised for sale (or indeed if rumours spread about a potential sale), this can act as a catalyst for a community to consider if it might purchase the site. Therefore sometimes the desire for an ownership/lease type of engagement can arise as a result of a proposed sale of forest land and concern by a community that a person or organisation outside of that community might purchase and manage the land without engaging the local community. If the community cannot find the funds to purchase the site then frustrations can set in.

So success and failure varies according to the geography and the people involved and how the money's coming into play in terms of the actual outcomes, but the actual process itself can also vary quite a bit depending on the players and how well they engage with each other. [FES]

Most community projects of this sort, landownership management type projects tend to be the result of some sort of catalyst and often that's a negative catalyst and people they see an adversary or an issue that's of concern to them and they get motivated to try and respond to that. [Disengaged CWG]

In the context of this report, therefore, some partnerships are 'second best' choices, resulting from failed attempts to buy NFE land.

3.3. Dimensions of engagement

The study is a follow up to one conducted in 2002 by Mary Hopley. To maintain the link with the earlier evaluation, we developed a matrix scoring exercise based on six dimensions of engagement promoted in the 2002 report. This is described in Annex 1.

The purpose of the exercise was not so much to produce quantitative measures of difference, but to explore patterns, and stimulate discussion about the reasons for

those patterns. The results are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6 below. Broad patterns are:

- community representatives have scored their experiences along the range of responses and include some at the “fantastic” level; this contrasts with the more critical scores assigned by FES staff;
- community representatives have a more negative experience of being fully informed about engagement processes compared with the FES staff rankings;
- FES staff scored representation lower than the community indicating some doubts they had over the composition of decision making units and representation processes;
- community representatives had more “poor” responses for the dimensions of accountability and transparency, but overall FES staff scored these more critically;
- community groups were more positive about the comprehensive dimension of engagement than were FES staff.

In one of the group discussions, FES staff reflected amongst themselves how unlikely they would be to rate themselves highly:

- *That's Forestry Commission all over. We're terrible at saying how fabulous we are.*
 - *We can aspire to it, it's just not achievable.*
 - *We can aspire to it.*
 - *We're not there yet.*
 - *I think to do that there's still an awful lot of work, I think there wouldn't be any company that would be fantastic.*
 - *And maybe some people have certain sites that are maybe there but as a whole the... all of the collective sites do not reach that.*
- [abridged discussion, FES group discussions]

One of the key outputs of the scoring exercise was that it generated discussion about how performance had changed (usually improved). Low scores on transparency were related to issues of trust and legacy. Many felt that accountability had improved:

At a local level we are far more accountable than we used to be and in taking into account the community's point of view and for me there's been real progress. [FES]

but staff expressed concerns about accountability (linked to representativeness) of community groups.

Figure 4. FES staff (n=21) scoring dimensions of engagement

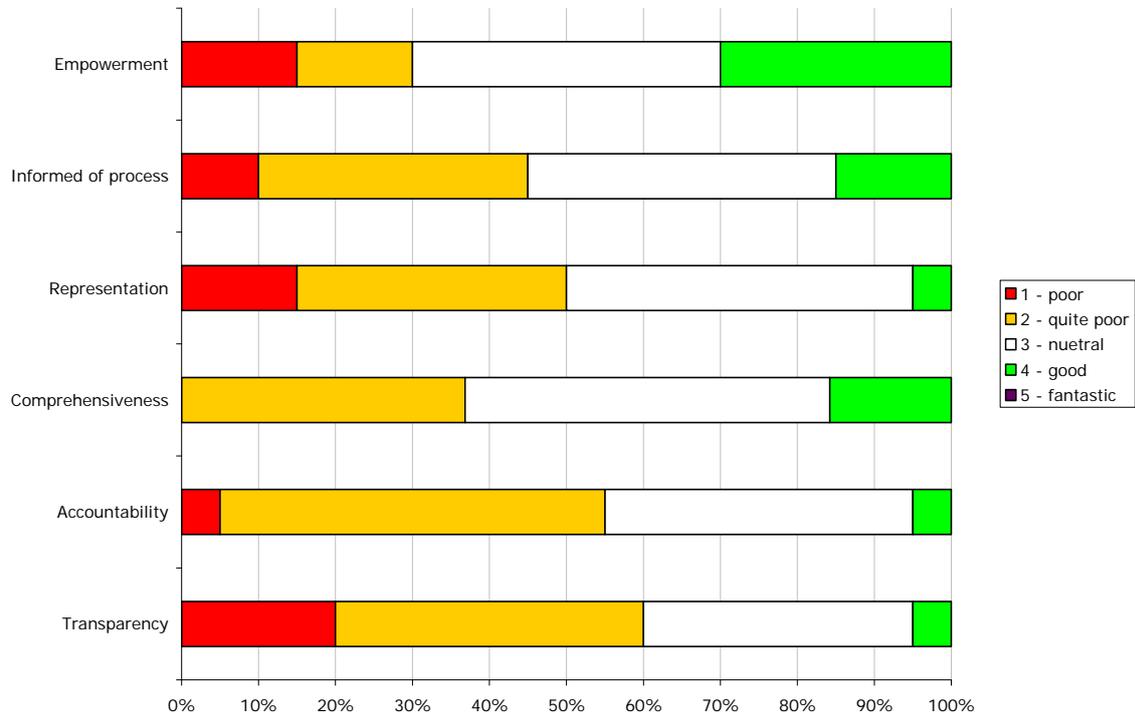
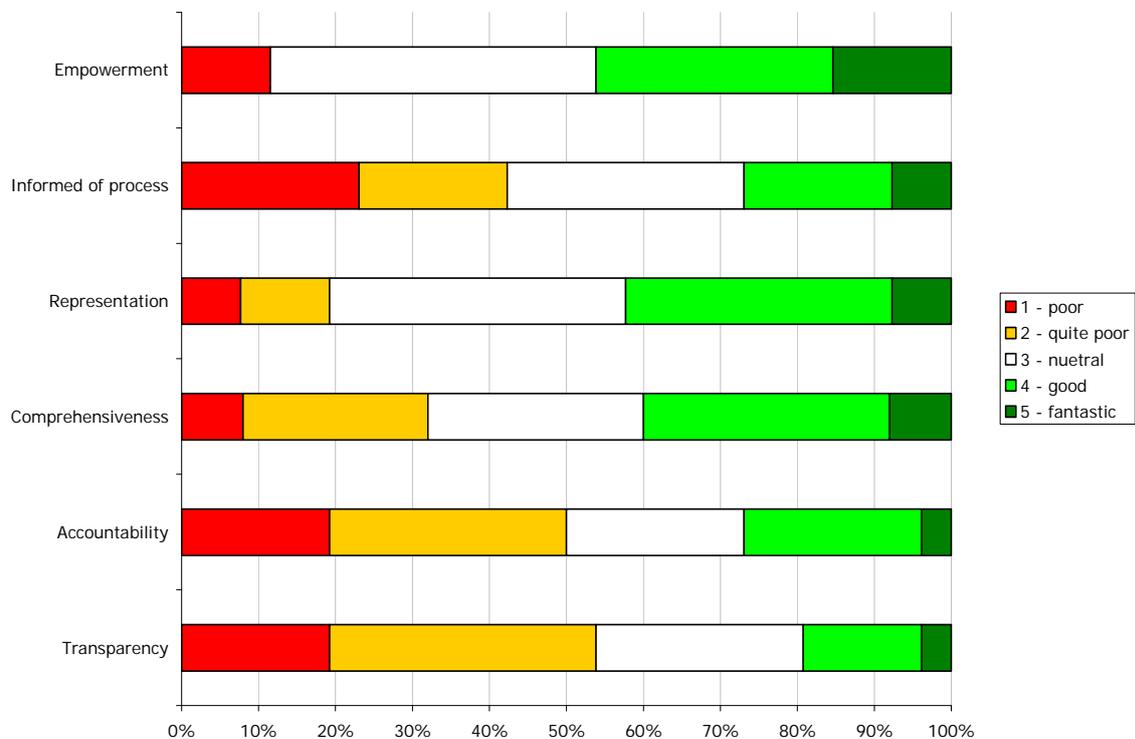


Figure 5. Community representatives (n=25) scoring dimensions of engagement



Comments on 'informed' were similar to those on accountability in that they reflected improvement – in particular community groups are seen as much more informed than they used to be and this is welcomed. However the discussion highlighted areas where confusion is still experienced:

[There is] confusion about the different parts of the Forestry Commission which can make processes confusing, and knowing different points of contact difficult. In other senses there is a mismatch between community's 'wants' and what's possible under policy. [FES]

The 'empowered' dimension generated valuable discussion which summarised recent change:

Some groups are now much more confident about finding out what's possible having seen and learnt from other examples. They move up the empowerment scale pretty fast. [FES]

Finally, the discussion about dimensions was often linked to standardisation (see below).

If you want transparency, accountability and everything, you need to be all singing from the same hymn-sheet. [FES]

3.4. Community groups: diversity and social sustainability

3.4.1. Sustainability

Groups which are towards the right hand end of the FCS engagement spectrum, from 'helping manage' to 'empowered', often struggle for numbers.

It was the same old, same old, the five or six of us doing everything and probably two or three of those doing most of it and therefore it really didn't progress. [disengaged CWG]

This is of course a familiar problem in voluntary work:

[The] only trouble with our group is the lack of volunteers, because the forest is taken for granted by the town. Everybody uses it and we're a bit down on volunteers to do the work. [CWG]

One interviewee spoke of the difficulty of maintaining community volunteer involvement particularly if people feel progress is slow or not really being made, given that most volunteers in her community had jobs:



interest wanes and once that's happened [i.e. agreement not being reached] it's really exceedingly difficult, unless there's a new reason or something exciting happening, to get it going again. [NGO]

3.4.2. Diversity and representation

Diversity around engagement with FES can be looked at in a number of different ways:

- 1 The socio-economic diversity amongst the members and volunteers taking part in CWG governance and managing activities. FES has little influence over diversity in this context. This is an issue of representation that rests with the groups and NGOs themselves, and is influenced by legal and other conditions, for example, most incorporated groups cannot have under-18s as members (Land Reform Act rules).
- 2 The socio-economic diversity of the people who take advantage of the work undertaken by community groups and NGOs, or who come and participate in the events they organise. The community groups, NGOs and FES have some influence over this and have duties to encourage diversity at this level.
- 1 The diversity in the form, scope, socio-economic characteristics and objectives of the community groups and NGOs that FES engages with. FES has duties to encourage diversity in engagement at this level.

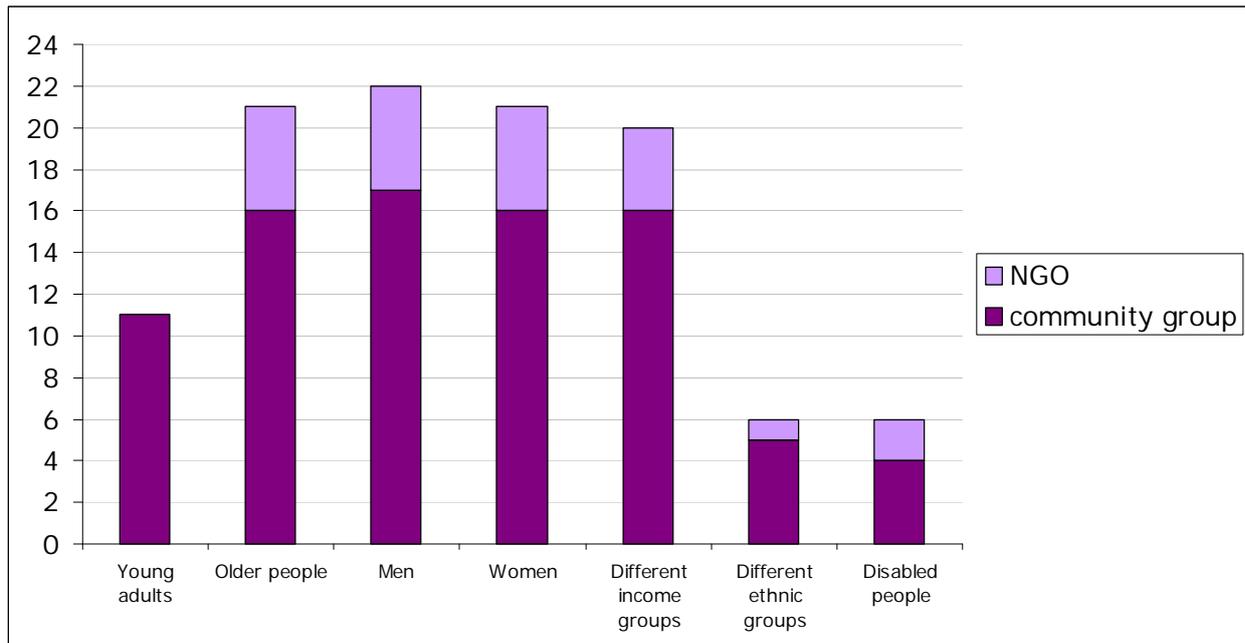
Achieving diversity of engagement in these three different ways needs to be set against the national and local level diversity context. Outwith the Central belt, for example, ethnic diversity is insignificant. However, diversity by age and income exist across the country, between Highland and lowland, urban and rural. The pursuit of diversity in representation and woodland users also needs to be set against the reality that whatever sphere of community and voluntary action is investigated, it is those people who have a strong interest who tend to participate. Taking this into account, seeking diversity is about ensuring that barriers to engagement are removed, and opportunities for engagement are crafted that enable all kinds of people to take part, even if they choose not to.

Diversity in group representation and governance

The terms used to describe people (young adults, mostly older people, disabled people, people from different ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities) in the participant information form were not closely defined, so they have been interpreted by community representatives according to their own understanding. The results are indicated in Figure 7. Older people, men and women, and people from a range of income groups are well represented. A total of 11 (46%) of groups involve younger people. This is high considering the restrictions often placed on younger people's participation. In the case of one NGO young people make up the management committee of the organisation. A few groups involved disabled people

(6 or 25%) or people from minority ethnic backgrounds (6 or 25%), and again these are relatively high figures if set against national level statistics for these diversity groups (i.e. 20% for disability – Table 8 in the 2011 census, and 4% for people from Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds BAME – Table 2 in the 2011 census).

Figure 6. What kinds of people get involved in your group (n=24)?



Maintaining the diversity of understanding and representation within community governance mechanisms is also challenging:

When you consult with the statutory consultee of the community council within certain areas, it tends to be the people that are very proactive and have the time to do it, whereas you're maybe not getting the sort of wider local view of how they feel about having the woodland developed [FES]

A common perception among staff is that the CWGs and WUGs themselves are not always representative of the local population:

There will be people in communities that have got very, very different views, even within that community. And therefore to some extent are not really seen as representative of the community, more representative of themselves [FES]

We have quite a few experiences where there are individuals who are saying they are representative of a community group, but in fact they're really just representative of themselves and one or two others who have time on their hands. [FES]

This is a challenge recognised by groups:

Basically the constitution says we represent the people of [names area] but really it was, yeah, mostly local people, very local - the wider community didn't really engage. There were people from the west end of [the loch], but even then I'm not sure we represented their views very well. We gave them the opportunity. They didn't really take us up on it. [CWG]

Efforts are put into finding solutions. As one CWG explained they had talked about trying to engage with the wider community and used methods such as sending a questionnaire (via the schools) home to parents, but with little success. They continued to have low attendance at annual general meetings.

There is a pragmatic recognition that there is only so much community groups can do themselves with regard to diversity. As one person put it

Ultimately if people are interested and want to engage they will ... ultimately you can't force people to come along ... if the white older gent wants to come along and enjoys this then he will and why not [FES]

Diversity of people coming to activities or using woodland

The participant information form asked community groups and NGOs to say more about their objectives, who they aimed their activities at, i.e. whether they thought locals or visitors from further afield were the main beneficiaries of engagement. The results are illustrated in Figure 8. The majority of groups are aiming to provide woodland access and services to local people and visitors from further afield. Just eight group representatives (33%) said they aimed to engage local people alone. There was little opinion expressed about whether the diversity of those using woodlands was unsatisfactory, or a major concern for groups or FES. A couple of general comments recognised the issue might exist, but was a general problem experienced by community groups and FES alike.

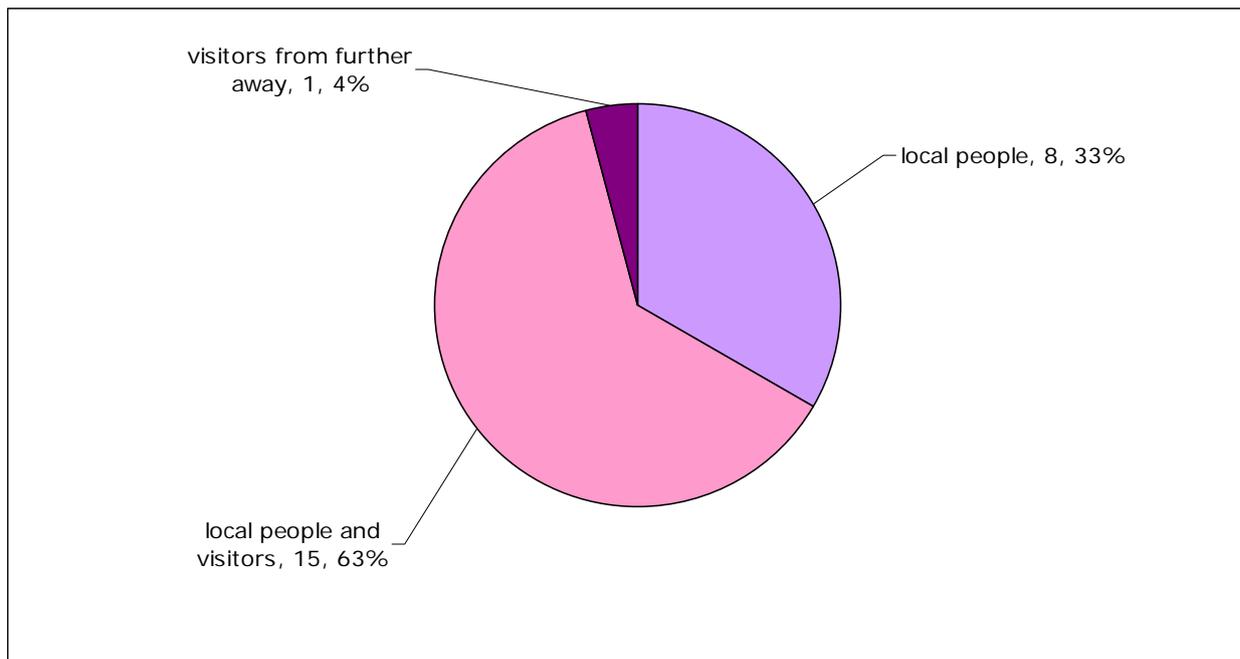
I don't feel like they [FES] are discriminating against a particular group, I just think everybody has got the same problem [CWG]

Some community groups expressed frustration and a lack of knowledge about the Equality duties they needed to observe in FES woodlands. For example, one person said:

to have this kind of partnership with the Commission is a bit Big Brother. yes, you must do this. Yes, it must be this. Yes, it must include some Gaelic despite the fact that nobody speaks Gaelic here We're going, "Why?" That really got people's backs up

Equally, there were comments about how FES had facilitated CWG and WUG thinking about how more people from different sections of society could be provided with opportunities to take part.

Figure 7. Who gets involved in the activities and opportunities your woodland group provides (n=24)?



3.5. Expectations and outcomes

3.5.1. Good experiences

In group discussions, and several interviews, there was an overall emphasis on good experiences particularly with the local CRT staff:

They've been very, very, supportive with us. [CWG]

They couldn't be more helpful. [CWG]

One NGO working with young people (aged 12-25) in a deprived area described these positive experiences in more detail. They started to introduce environmental issues to young people, in the last few years, to encourage them to conserve and appreciate greenspace where they live. An FES community ranger started to engage by attending community events and introducing himself and working with the community. The NGO interviewee described changes brought about by the ranger, including improvements to path infrastructure, a clean up of the woodland with young people and a local school, helping FES to put up bird boxes, and a number of celebrations and events. The community engagement with FES is going well with the community feeling that it has a useful point of contact with FES and

improvements made to the wood make it a resource the community can now access and enjoy.

So they've [FES] got the woodlands to a condition that the community can use them and kids can use them safely, and it's promoting the wee nature trails and health walks and getting families to do that, which a lot of the families are doing. [NGO]

Another NGO runs a 'recovery through nature' programme and a couple of years ago started a conservation recovery programme with FES. Since then the NGO has also tendered to and been successful with FES in developing a skills to employment programme for 16-25 year olds.

We've got regular contact with the Forestry, we've got a fantastic partnership with the Forestry Commission through this. [NGO]

The interviewee was pleased that FES staff are sometimes out on site with the young people, who value the organisation's interest in them. He described the difficulties of targeting hard to reach young people who are excluded, isolated or having problems with drugs and alcohol. Due to some of these difficulties the organisation had to meet with FES but were very encouraged by FES wanting to work with them to seek a solution:

And the good thing with that was the Forestry Commission were right on board with us, we did get invited to a meeting because of the poor performance but they are, obviously the Forestry Commission had to have an understanding of the target groups that we were trying to target and the problems that come with the groups. So ... it was a case of how can we work together to make it work, which has been really good for us. [NGO]

There was agreement that communities in the lowlands have different expectations and are easier to please:

The expectations are very low in the Central Belt, in all honesty. ... Every community we engage with, ... they're quite happy that someone is coming in, and being proactive and positive because a lot of the sites that we're taking over, have been unloved for a long, long time, ... bad stuff goes on in them, people don't go into them, we come along and then we start changing that. And we're delivering. [FES]

3.5.2. Indicators of success

Staff were asked how they would define success. Two responses were typical: 'we wouldn't get any complaints' and 'the community would not need us so much':



[Success] would be coming out at the other end of whatever we've done with all sides being content with the end result. So if for example we were going to do some physical work onsite, be it felling or replanting or whatever, that the communities who were involved felt no need to complain, in fact quite the opposite. [FES]

Self-sustaining – if our involvement slides down a scale so that we are involving ourselves as and when we are invited. [FES]

A wide range of success indicators reflect the sense that success stops complaints (and see comments later in the report about the community engagement team being seen as the 'complaints department' in each district):

No complaining emails. [FES]

Silence. [FES]

More positively, most also saw success as community ownership of the result:

when you see the community promoting what they are doing – outwith what we are doing - in newspapers, online [FES]

it's at the output end – it's not to do with process or the number of groups – it's when you can go to the meeting and see someone presenting and saying FC has been excellent [FES]

when you wander out in your own time and see something being used [FES]

success really for me is the community's out there using the site, where the schools are, sports groups, or religious groups or whatever it is, but that's them using the woodland [FES]

Success in urban areas is more often related to providing a place that people want to use. There was a clear emphasis on this difference: there was very little evidence of CWGs taking the initiative in the cities, nor of taking ownership of the outcome. Success is then reflected in use, and care:

All the people went there to do all the wrong things. And it's just a gradual process whereby we've been doing things. We've been improving the infrastructure, removing the fly-tipping, getting people out using the groups, doing it in partnership with other agencies like Scottish Canals and things like that. ... to me, that's what success is, it's a busy woodland with lots of different users using it ... positively rather than negatively. [FES]

Success to us is they don't set fire to the place. [FES]

There was acknowledgement by both staff and community groups that success depends on process. Reflecting on two urban sites, and on the difference in outcome:

One we've got that was a new acquisition, we went in belt and braces with community consultation and then forest design plan. The other one ... just kind of gathered pace gradually, and of the two, it's the one that's attracted more partners as it's gone along, like a snowball, and that one's actually probably the one that stands out for us as being most successful. [FES]

And in a different district, a staff member reflected on the need to be seen:

With the fire-raising situation, the Forestry Commission was like a negative body because the community's saying 'you're not part of this' ... So the first thing I had to do was to engage with the community 'Honest, we're not that bad.' And it's just building up trust over a long period of time. A lot of people were hiding ... they thought that they were doing something they shouldn't have been doing! [Now] We had folk talk to us, saying 'you're not bad'. [FES]

This theme of being seen, of being out in the woods was emphasised repeatedly, particularly in the Stirling workshop which represented more urban areas.

We need to keep the people on the ground, out in the forest, connecting. [FES]

There was also some degree of recognition that maintaining successful relationships between the community and FES over time rests to some degree on evolving plans, approaches and levels of engagement that suit changing circumstances.

3.5.3. Community disappointments

About half the community representatives described a relationship with FES that worked on the whole. Of the others a few were seriously disgruntled:

We had a bit of an issue over this whole land agency thing which was dragging on and dragging on. ... We felt, what were we allowed to do and what were we not allowed to do? ... And really, frankly put, the relationship didn't work. That's the best way to describe it. [CWG]

They came back after a huge delay and much chasing and the lease was a hugely formal lease and was not what we considered to be a peppercorn rent for an organisation that had no visible income streams [Disengaged CWG]

One NGO found that FES's five year delay in signing agreements now worked to their advantage, as the terms of the agreement no longer suited them.

Some of their rules and goals have changed during the time of the management agreement, and we're now being asked to spend quite a lot of our own money to change things to fit with the new regulations for the way the path should be ... or else tear them out. ... It's slightly frustrating things, we've used grant money to put in these things, with full agreement, everybody knew what was happening when we received the money. [NGO]

A disengaged NGO in the Scottish Lowlands had been consulted by FES and felt their views had not been taken into consideration; they wanted to take forward some improvements in their local woodland and get the school involved and knew other communities had agreements with FES, however:

Once we'd worked up a couple of draft agreements it appeared that the powers that be higher up Forest Enterprise or Forestry Commission, I'm not sure which it was, were not entering into any new agreements, and this dragged on for a couple of years... So because the community had been kind of led up the garden path it was very hard to maintain interest in the project because nothing was happening, and everyone got a bit frustrated. [Disengaged NGO]

Others also talked about deteriorating relations and failed expectations. One participant described a 'very successful' co-operation with FES established over 15 years ago, in which the community group signed a joint management plan with FES including deer control, felling and thinning and fence enclosures. However, apart from a continuing conservation partnership all other 'co-operation and communication have effectively been withdrawn by FES' without explanation, according to him. Disappointment seemed to be compounded by a failure to carry out a promised review of the FDP which the group had hoped would aid discussions about harvesting opportunities.

I just think there are difficulties when goalposts start dancing around the place and we all fall into that trap occasionally because decisions are made with a certain amount of knowledge ... and then a person comes in maybe with a different view and depending on their character they want to impose that view. [Disengaged CWG]

Other representatives pointed out this long term relationship is not always easy to build and maintain:

What is very difficult to develop with the Forestry Commission, at a district level and more like nationally, is an enduring relationship and one that they see as being something they are committing to for the long term. [CWG]

Delays and lack of communication were widely reported and lead to mistrust:

We just felt there was stuff going on behind the scenes that we didn't know about and at certain points we felt the Commission were basically trying to extricate themselves from the agreement so that they could get rid of the ground basically [Disengaged CWG].

I ended up having to write a letter of complaint ... because we had done everything that they had asked, we had got well on our way to getting the money that we required to do this and they still could not produce these legal documents that allowed us to go ahead with it, to finalise it. It was getting more and more frustrating. We'd been fundraising. People had been doing all sorts of things in the time to raise money for these bike tracks, everybody was getting really excited about it, and still the Forestry Commission could not get these documents to us. [CWG]

One group commented that there is a

tacit assumption that current practice is broadly OK, whereas in fact it is fundamentally flawed ... now we very much feel Forest Enterprise don't understand what a partner is, they keep trying to treat us as contractors [Disengaged CWG]

A number of comments reflect a feeling that FES does not understand volunteers:

Whoever organised [a workshop in the middle of the working day] has really not thought about the fact that people they're liaising with are all volunteers [and] that we all have other jobs. This is not our job. This is our free time we are willingly giving for our community, ... to benefit our community and we're grateful for the opportunity to do that with the Forestry Commission and we are grateful for the expertise and for the funds that they bring to that but at the same time they need to appreciate a little more that actually this is not our job [CWG]

3.5.4. Procurement issues

An issue that was highlighted a number of times by community groups related to FES commercial relations with community groups. All who raised this subject felt that the situation had deteriorated and reflected a blind spot on the part of FES.

For example, one disaffected partner found that his group was no longer considered partners with FES but as:

Third parties to be treated like any other commercial operators and thus subjected to bureaucracy (sales procedures and procurement processes) designed for the likes of Tilhill. [disengaged CWG]



Another felt that recent developments explicitly excluded them from job opportunities:

The 'framework' system is an effective way of excluding local contractors. Locals are prevented from being on the 'framework' and then FC staff can claim it is out of their control & they don't have to award contracts locally. [CWG]

This was framed as a specific example of declining relationships, and drew strongly resentful comment. It is important to note that some of these comments were specifically about contracts, while others by contrast related to FES staff treating CWGs like contractors rather than equal partners.

3.5.5. Staff frustrations

Both urban and rural CRT staff experienced frustration with resource limitation, and having to refuse support to some CWGs. In some cases this was owing to lack of time or money, but others felt limited by their district's priorities:

We've got community groups asking to come out and do stuff with us, and I've got a list in my inbox of about 20 groups I've just said no, no, no, no. [FES]

So they come to us feeling empowered, they've got this great idea, a great opportunity, they're going to have this great resource, but the reality, when we can't take that on, and every single site across the country, then they feel completely the polar opposite to empowered. It's all sort of deflated then, because we haven't been able to facilitate them in what they want to do. [FES]

While most staff frustrations were about the limitations of their job description (discussed further below), some also related to community groups themselves. Again these difficulties contrasted between CWGs and WUGs. Among the more empowered CWGs, staff found it difficult to cope with high rates of volunteer turnover, unrealistic expectations of FES and of the groups themselves. Examples were given of CWGs where the board of directors changes every year, and of others where conflict had broken out. Staff were often sympathetic but felt that they were blamed in situations where communities also had difficulties:

I struggle with the groups set up a long time ago, there's lots of community out there enjoying the wood but they aren't necessarily represented on the group that is set up – [there are] not enough folk willing to go forward as office bearers. ... Some groups represent a huge area, but the community group managing one of the forests struggles to get the membership so doesn't have funds to pay the liability insurance. [FES]

The situation in the urban lowlands is rather different, and fewer CRT are working with constituted groups. Instead their frustrations are with users, and particularly those who ignore safety notices around harvesting operations in the woods.

Expectation management is seen as a very important part of community engagement. Managing hopes and aspiration positively can obviously avoid a community feeling disappointed or let down and can enable an appropriate level of engagement to be reached, for example

We have one or two examples where people have actually come along with very high expectations, and then having chatted it through with them ... they've actually changed their level of expectation because they've suddenly realised that the old adage, money doesn't go on trees, is actually correct. [FES]

A member of FES staff outlined how some communities could have high expectations of FES and acknowledged that this could be difficult to deal with given the staff resource available:

It can be quite difficult, it depends on what, you're very much in the hands of the local staff for this as to how adept and expert they are in managing these expectations, and it can also be difficult because the expectations [of communities] can migrate and change as well. [FES]

Others who work closely with communities felt it was simply a matter of misunderstanding the resource:

An awful lot of folk think we're a bottomless pit of time. [FES]

Staff believe that this is an aspect of their approach which has changed quite significantly in recent years, and talk about raised expectations being a significant legacy issue.

Communication is key throughout the whole process. ... We need to be honest as a Forestry Commission. Sometimes we can be a little bit misleading, misguiding with communities, particularly when maybe some new acquisitions or forest design plans where we are keen to find out what communities want to get I think sometimes we... perhaps lead on communities a little bit to make them think that anything's possible ... in my experience that's happened and it's sometimes let the communities down a wee bit. [FES]

3.6. Paperwork, process and time

3.6.1. Paperwork on NFE

Both communities and staff were aware of the frustrations surrounding issues of insurance, health and safety.

Our dealings with the Forestry have been very good, except they're just over the top on health and safety now and they won't let us use even use a strimmer, certainly not a chainsaw, without being heavily qualified [CWG]

Staff were very aware of and sometimes embarrassed by these requirements themselves.

They see us as the bad guy because they see us as making them do the risk assessments. I want to get past that battle. [FES]

We've become more and more anxious, I suppose, of things that may happen. We've got more and more systems in place for the better, I would say actually, but [they] cause restrictions and pressures on achieving things. So I think maybe that's why we've come up with this conflict. We're actually all people who want to but we can't always; we're getting lots of restrictions imposed on us. [FES]

One thing we've been finding more and more challenging, ... we need to go through this, this and this, and [ask] "have you got insurance? Have you done a risk assessment?" And they go, "do you know what?" And that's a problem, that is an issue, that people are just not doing things because they see what they've got to go through. [FES]

Some community representatives reported good experiences with staff who helped them to find ways to cope with the regulations. Staff felt that it is the ranger service that can best help with this, and that the organisation needs staff who can work directly with communities.

3.6.2. A spectrum of agreements

A spectrum of agreements are available from informal, through permissions, management agreements, rent, lease and purchase. Getting a 'permission' was widely felt to be straightforward – it fits with existing systems. When things are more novel, or more legal, problems arise.

We have suffered as an organisation for a number of management agreements that aren't worth the paper they were written. [FES]



Several community representatives could not in fact say whether they had a formal agreement or, if so, what kind. Experiences ranged from positive:

It's not a formal partnership, we have significantly enhanced the forest property ... so that's been positive for us and positive for them. [CWG]

to sceptical:

Basically the agreement says, this 15 things that we have to do on the land and then it says the Forestry Commission is responsible for approving anything we do. That's the only thing they're responsible for, but they're really, they're really very one sided to call them partnerships. [NGO]

to completely disheartened:

For the people involved in this it has been hell, it really has been torturous. [CWG]

3.6.3. Agreements and legal aspects

Several NGOs and community groups gave examples where agreements had been drafted but never signed. Many expressed frustration about delay when the agreements are legal types. At the calmer end of the range:

[We are] waiting on a 25 year lease for the site that we've been negotiating for the last year. We've been around a year of waiting, we've done everything on our side that's required and again, like a lot of groups, we're just awaiting the paperwork, and it seems to have got lost in the ether at the moment and is probably at the bottom of the paper pile. [NGO]

These delays are the principle cause of (sometimes extreme) disillusionment among community groups, sometimes leading to group disbanding.

A typical situation was expressed by a group that was confused when after working with FES on an agreement, it was not taken forward.

If you're not making progress, you know very well you're going to lose your volunteer workforce. So, it's lose, lose, for both ... the Forestry and the voluntary groups [when] volunteers get disheartened. [CWG]

3.6.4. Key role of land agents

Although groups which had never needed to interact with Land Agents were generally unaware of the job title, almost all who had attempted to make formal legal agreements focused on the Land Agent's role as a bottleneck – both in terms



of the professional training for the role, and the workload that land agents are experiencing:

We experienced a significant inertia shall we say within the Forestry Commission mostly coming from the Land Agency Department. ...I think that trust perhaps was undermined primarily when the land agents got involved because land agents have the imagination squeezed out of them when they do their degree as far as I can see. [CWG]

Community group members described attempts to liaise, and recognised the work load:

With our recent lease negotiation which has taken over a year, ... I have since spoken to [the Land Agent] and he said that his pile of paperwork was quite large, but he would dig our piece out, and try and put it near to the top of the pile. So, it sounds as though it's not just ourselves that are having the issues with getting the paperwork signed and getting it processed. [CWG]

Another group that had an agreement with FES wanted to slightly extend an existing building and then rent it from FES and found it difficult to understand why this was not allowed within the existing agreement:

The partnership really didn't work very well for various reasons. Possibly both sides were at fault I would argue. It's hard to say chickens and eggs here, but we experienced a significant inertia shall we say within the Forestry Commission mostly coming from the Land Agency Department. [Disengaged CWG]

After a 'huge' delay a very formal lease was presented to the community group with a charge for the rental of the existing building set at over £100 per annum which the group felt was too high, as it did not have many funds to draw on. Discussion with FES began to try and resolve this but a number of changes in FES staff meant further delays and the issue has not been resolved. The community group has now practically dissolved.

[It] had a massive impact on the morale of the group. It had a big impact on the working relationship. Every time there was a new manager put in place we had to go back to the drawing board and the degree of positiveness of the Commission towards the project varied and we just felt we weren't getting anywhere. Suffice to say that in the long run we all pretty much got pretty heavily volunteer fatigued and to all intents and purposes the Group's now disbanded. [Disengaged CWG]

FES staff agreed with the location of the problem although were often more generous in understanding the constraints:



Getting Land Agent time to deal with things is the difficulty. CRT is always lowest in the list of their priorities, it won't generate income, they are overloaded with requests for other land agent stuff that involves quite large sums of money which could be dangerous or legally interesting – so trying to get community stuff signed off can take 12 months. ... It's not the land agent's fault, they are prioritising. But it can build frustrations in the community. [FES]

This point was emphasised repeatedly. One group of staff, discussing an agreement that had taken more than two years, commented:

- It's the Commission that's been holding it back. ... But that's ridiculous. I mean, that is ridiculous. But that's a big issue.*
- Yes, we've had a similar experience. It's had a wee negative impact on what was initially supposed to be a very positive opportunity for community youth. The fact that this was taking so long.*
- Yes. It's still not... it's still not came together!*
- And now as a result of that group have sort of lost steam and so the will in terms of pulling together funding groups, et cetera et cetera.*
- So the blockage is the legal side, is it?*
- Yes. Yes, yes, yes.*
- 100 per cent.*
- Two years is ridiculous. And it still hasn't happened yet. And I think that's a huge issue, because you cannae get sustainable communities unless they have a programme. [abridged discussion, FES]*

3.6.5. Initiatives to standardise agreements

This was proposed by both community group discussions, and emphasised at several stages in the conversation.

I do feel like they start from scratch every time. [CWG]

[The Land Agent] was coming across as being uncomfortable if there wasn't a similar case where he could just go and say right, here is another [mentions group specific asset] that runs through the forest, it's exactly the same thing as that, I'll go and get their lease agreement and then get it signed for you. The fact that it was something new and different and he had not dealt with. [CWG]

Staff agreed:

It seems to be we're always having to reinvent the wheel ... I developed a community agreement with [mentions community] eight years ago. It took me two years to do it, but why can't that

be used for other groups now? Why is it we're effectively having to reinvent it now? [FES]

Several respondents emphasised the need to find the appropriate *level* of agreement. One discussion amongst staff pointed to an example where a group had been strongly encouraged to apply for ownership through the NFLS, although ownership was not necessary for them to achieve their objectives. The two year NFLS process had, in their view, been unnecessary, and had led to loss of interest amongst the group.

Some pointed to the Wales programme "Woodlands and You", which offers a menu of options for community engagement, with standard processes set out for each. The advantage of this approach is that there is clarity for community groups and NGOs as well as FCW/NRW staff about what kind of agreement suits what kind of engagement objective (e.g. from a permission to a lease) and a process clearly explained.

3.7. CRT job descriptions and preparation

3.7.1. Differences between districts

As shown in table 4, the CRT role is represented by a wide variety of job titles:

We've got as many job titles as we've got employees [FES]

Priority setting varies by district, and Forest District Managers (FDMs) have some autonomy within their CRT allocation to apportion the funding *'in a reasonable way'*.

So yes, you will find every one of our ten Districts, if you asked them to put community engagement, community placement onto a priority list, they'd all be different, they'd be different places. [FES]

A few attributed this to social differences in the wider public of different districts:

In our area we have a different culture, the public just go out and do outdoor things, they aren't setting up groups as in other places ... I have a valuable role of being the translator, sitting in the middle, I package it up and go to other people to explain what is going on. [FES]

But in general there was a consensus that the FDM, and the internal 'culture' of each district, set the climate for community engagement more than the social context.

I've worked in two different districts, one was completely pro community work and the other was ... not anti, but a lot less. It was a way-down priority, I would say, and that's really affected my job, because I've got a lot of enthusiasm for work in communities, and

I'm kind of frustrated because I can't get out and do what I want to do. [FES]

Both staff workshops, and both community workshops, generated considerable discussion about variations between districts in terms of support for community engagement, and the attitude of the FDM. Some were also dealing with much strong public scepticism as a result of past decisions by senior staff, and a legacy of lost trust. This works both ways. Staff from two different districts commented:

We've promised them lots of things, we're catching up, it really doesn't help to explain that we don't have resources, there's an overwhelming feeling that it's the same old story. So we are trying to draw that line in the sand. [FES]

We have a degree of baggage from previous community groups that you are always battling with. [FES]

This district focus presents an additional challenge in the face of new policy developments. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill will provide communities with greater opportunities to engage with local budgets and decision making. An FES staff member felt that this would be a challenge for the organisation as it does not have budgets for specific forests, it has district budgets. The staff member felt this could prove frustrating for communities that might in the future legitimately ask 'what's the budget for this forest as we want to work with you on that'. This was thought a fundamental challenge for FES as it is not the way it operates.

3.7.2. Support from line management

Discussion around this was animated. Many FES staff participants felt unsupported, or even that their jobs contradicted the prevailing internal culture:

I come across the attitude in the FD that "you don't go near communities with a bargepole. They are a thorn our side" [FES]

I do feel it's very much top down – 'keep them at arms' length' so we don't even try saying 'you could find funding there'. It's very much 'they could be a hindrance' not a benefit. It comes from some of the baggage, there are other feelings behind that as well, some of the groups ... have been very demanding, 'this is wrong, that is wrong'[FES]

The messages I get from higher management is there is no way I'm going to get rangers at local level, so I have to draw the line. [FES]

Line management sets a strong tone within FES. One staff member reflected that this internal culture is linked to the way in which it engages externally. If the cultural norm of the organisation is control and command internally then that tends



to get reflected externally. Empowerment of staff to make decisions was also considered important:

If you identify a member of staff to lead on engaging the communities but they can't actually decide or make a decision on anything then that ain't very helpful for the communities engaging with them whereas if you have an empowered structure then those that are leading on engagement can actually do that meaningfully [FES].

3.7.3. Planning for community engagement

Staff reported a wide range of approaches to planning engagement activities whether for themselves or across the district team.

In Scottish Lowlands we have community engagement plans for each of the beat areas, and that has a review every three months so the team do get a chance to reflect on their beat, what's went well and what's not went so well ...and then that's recorded. [FES]

It's a traffic light system as well, because we know things can slip back, so it might go from green into amber, okay, we need to focus a bit more on that area. [FES]

While other districts contrasted:

We're almost the opposite... there's two of us the local communities, and we don't have any community engagement plans or anything like that. ... so actually monitoring is probably just because we know and it doesn't actually get formally recorded. [FES]

While different districts have different needs, most agreed that if community engagement is to be mainstreamed, a more formal approach to planning and monitoring across the district will be required. They pointed out that this will also help to maintain continuity in the face of high staff turnover.

If it was all held in management units, communities, you could go there, you could find your list of consultees, your groups you're working with, it would be far easier than this current system where things are on the T drive somewhere. [FES]

They also wanted an awareness of the challenges of planning and monitoring such activities:

It's very different planning, say, a visitors' centre in a recreation forest where you can just take your time and plan it, do this this year, that next year. And when you're working with community groups they're a very flexible beast, depends on the funding, politics, the people change really quickly. [FES]

Again, these are real challenges for organisational culture and require support from line management.

3.7.4. Resource squeeze

Concerns were expressed that the loss of 15% of staff would be a challenge for community engagement. This interviewee suspected that loss of CRT staff was disproportionate and reflected low priority:

I suspect it's an area that compared to the other [FES] activities would be considered to be something that we could try and do another way. [FES]

This might provide the catalyst for embedding community engagement across the organisation. However, there is uncertainty about the future organisational set up of FES.

In CRT as staff numbers have dropped the workload has doubled That doesn't work You end up with some very frazzled people [FES]

CRT has taken the brunt of the staff cuts [which] means you can't give the service that people used to get, and for our staff, convincing them not to do 50-60 hours - quite often the community bit is the bit they don't want to drop - they know if they don't go to that meeting it's just going to come back and provide trouble. [FES]

3.7.5. To C or not to C?

Lively discussion in the FES staff groups characterised the question of including the 'C' in CRT – in other words, the 'community' along with 'recreation and tourism'. Some districts have shifted to a recreation and tourism team, with responsibility for the 'C' or community aspects now mainstreamed across all district staff.

Community engagement is a bit like health and safety, it's everybody's responsibility. [FES]

It [CRT] shouldn't be a complaints department. [FES]

I've also worked in England, where harvesting is the poor cousin, CRT is to the fore – here it is very much the other way round. I like what [person X] has done, dropping the C from his job title, making that apparent to everyone in the district that everyone who wears a green top has as much of a role in engagement with communities. [FES]

In one or two districts which have dropped the 'C' from CRT staff job titles, the result was viewed favourably:

It means not every phone call can be passed on to us because we've got community engagement in our job description. [FES]

This contrasts with other districts where maintaining separate staff responsibilities for 'community' means that:

... it's siloed people's jobs to the extent where you stop looking sideways. It doesn't work, communities don't care which part of the FC you work in, if you've got a green fleece on you've got a green fleece. [FES]

New acquisitions (as a result of the repositioning policy) meant that in more urban areas the operations staff would get involved in consultation and 'they actually thoroughly enjoy them'.

Staff were keen to compare experiences across districts and discussed this subject enthusiastically.

We're trying to bring them on board to realise that they're more involved than they think they are. But I think at the moment they're still very much the way you are in your districts, that they're doing harvesting, and we do the community stuff. [FES]

Others have gone the other way, and have separate 'community' and 'recreation' teams (in addition to the 'planning' and 'operations' teams) 'which often causes a little bit of friction sometimes'.

3.7.6. Turnover and staff suitability

A common complaint among community representatives was that they were met with changing members of staff:

We ended up with about three different changes of staff, different people we were dealing with at different levels and it went on for years and years and years and suffice to say it still has not been resolved [CWG]

Staff from several districts agreed that high turnover is a problem. In one district, figures indicated that of 70 staff, in the year to Aug 2013 there were 60 changes of staff. Many felt the issue was not simply one of turnover, but of post-filling by those who were not well disposed towards community engagement (and apparently not trained for it):

It takes people who are genuinely interested in doing that as part of their job and ... often the older Forestry boys they've come from a certain training background which focuses on farming trees and they're being squeezed into a different set of objectives [CWG]



There are individuals who I feel very much - and they say it straight out – “I’m only doing community work because I’m forced to, it’s not what I was hired for, it’s not why I got into this job”, and they clearly don’t want to be bothered, and that does still come across.
[NGO]

The person we spoke to was ... very approachable and positive. The person we met face to face was another person, and that’s when the problem started ... We turned up in our own spare time ... it was mainly a monologue from the Forestry Commission person, mainly to do with negatives of our proposal, and clearly showing an attitude which was anti voluntary groups, we thought. And we were dismissed, basically dismissed with our tails between our legs.
[Disengaged CWG]

3.7.7. Training and awareness

In the staff group discussions there was a strong feeling that training on community engagement should be provided for all staff, not just for CRT staff.

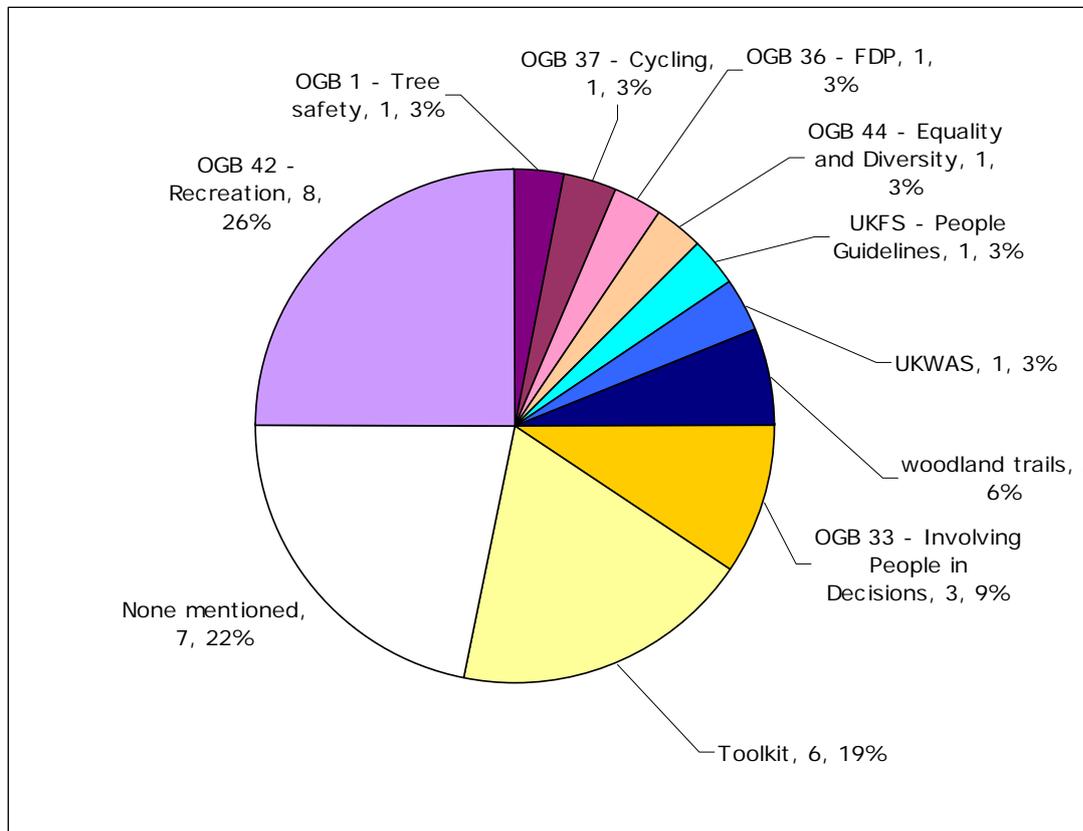
This [i.e. the CRT staff] isn’t the target group – there are others who haven’t done it at all. Ops colleagues – they have the potential to assist communities, to be able to do things that communities want, whether supporting visits to look at big bits of machinery, look at trees, they have potential to engage in the ways that communities want them to. But also with greatest respect, they have the potential to screw it up. [FES]

This was reflected in other districts, including those where CRT is strong:

The issue for me I think is probably across the districts in terms of the other functions, you know, the planning functions. I mean, it’s great that you’re within the planning team, but I don’t think that they have in their mindset, that engagement side of things, it’s something they have to do rather than something they kind of want to do and do well. [FES]

The participant information asked about any guidance and training FES staff used to support their engagement work. As Figure 9 shows, the majority of staff (8/19) refer to OGB 42 – Recreation, as a key reference source, and almost as many (6/19) mention what is known as the “Toolkit” i.e. Ambrose-Oji et al (2012). It is interesting that seven people did not mention using any supporting guidance at all.

Figure 8. What guidance do you use (n=19)? Information from staff participant information form



When asked about any training provided to help them with community engagement, three people mentioned the Toolkit training (two having received this in 2012, and one person who said a refresher would be useful because they had last had Toolkit training in 2005), two people had received training in dealing with difficult people, difficult messages and conflict, and two people had received training in participatory techniques including the accredited course by the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP).

3.7.8. Evaluating engagement

The participant information asked FES staff if they were monitoring and evaluating their engagement success. Figure 10 shows that this is most often done during occasional team meetings (8/19), or on a reactive basis when there is a problem or an issue to resolve (2/19). Just four staff said discussion and evaluation was addressed through regular team meetings. When asked more about what they were evaluating (see Figure 11) the most commonly used indicators (11/19) were process focused, e.g. looking at how decision making took place, and the degree of stakeholder involvement. Behaviour e.g. changes and attitudes, perceptions and the number of woodland users and visitors, and outcome indicators e.g. levels of income generated for community use, levels of wellbeing, and changes to

community cohesion were also popular. It was surprising to see that output indicators e.g. number of community activities, type of meetings conducted and the number and types of people attending were not used as widely.

Figure 9. When do you evaluate progress in community engagement (n=19)? Information from staff participant information form

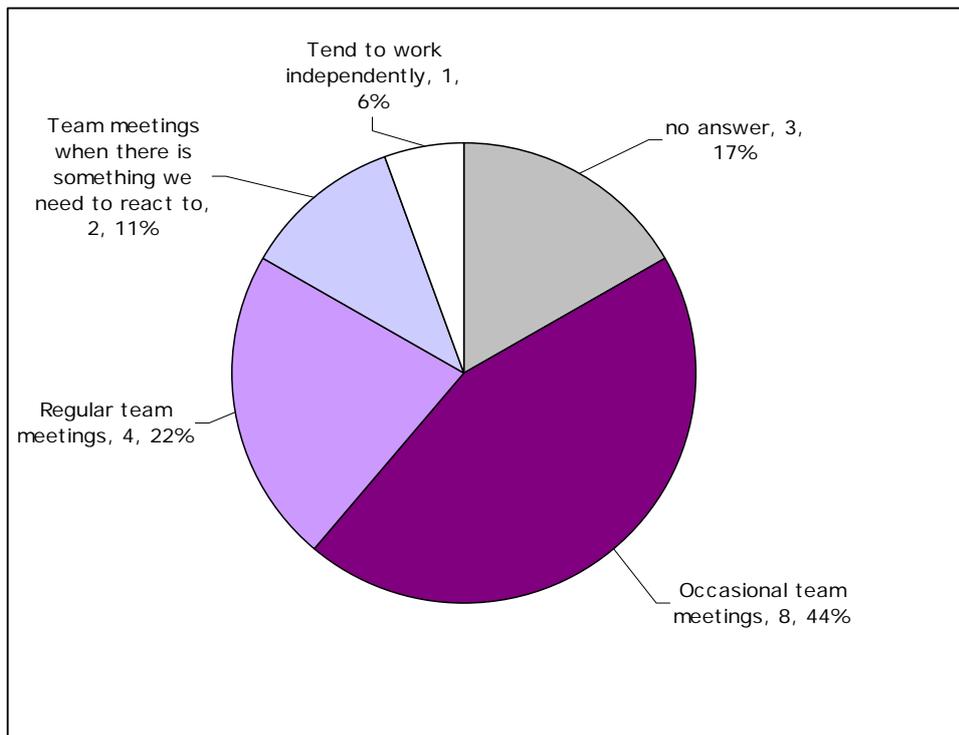
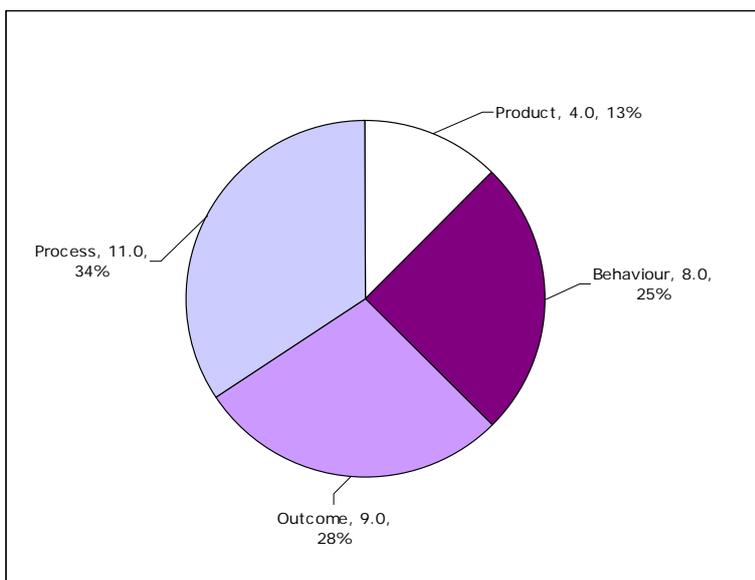


Figure 10. What kinds of indicators are you using in your evaluation of community engagement (n=19)? Information from staff participant information form



NB. FES staff were able to choose more than one kind of indicator

Several FES staff members indicated that the organisation did not carry out much evaluation of its community engagement activity, suggesting that there was a tendency within the organisation to focus on the practical sides of engagement. This is seen as characteristic of the culture of FES - that it delivers and then moves on to the next area/issue or engagement opportunity. Where evaluation does take place, staff felt it tends to be less focused on projects or programmes and more focused at a higher level e.g. the indicator used by the CWA on a satisfaction rating of community partnerships on the NFE (CWA, 2010). Even understanding how much staff time is spent on engagement is difficult. [see also the section on learning, below]

3.8. Organisation, policy and decision making

3.8.1. Organisational culture

Staff discussed the historical culture and legacy of the organisation and how that needs to be worked on. One described the change as a '*cultural journey*'.

We've come from a historical place where we would tend to see the national forest say as ours, and we like to control it and we like to get on and do what we feel is the delivering the goods. And culturally we've found it difficult to get our heads round the idea that others might want to influence that, and ...to some extent we might consider that as a frustration that's getting in the way of delivering. [FES]

Others saw a similar journey but a different motivation behind it:

We've gone from doing everything for everyone, to enabling – so we don't carry the insurance and we have to pass that burden on. [FES]

This is seen as a particular cultural challenge for the organisation:

Getting round to this idea that we aren't going to deliver things. [FES]

Saying "no", that's quite alien for people [i.e. staff], we are very much a doing organisation. [FES]

3.8.2. Who is making the decisions?

Many community representatives praised the efforts of CRT staff but felt that the ones they work with have little power. The following comments are typical of many – too many to include quotations from all:

Usually we find when we're working with individuals on the ground that they're excellent and they'll do their best to help out, but

increasingly they're being more and more constrained by rules and regulations, safety issues, tick boxes and whatever. [CWG]

The people we talk to are delightful, they appear to have no powers of decision. [WUG]

They're all charming, but ... it's hard to know who is in charge and who has the authority to do things. [CWG]

Ordinary foresters, they are excellent, never any problem. The problem is the quality of the minor decision makers, major decision makers, the quality is not there to appreciate the community view. [CWG]

Many felt there was a gap between their interactions, and decisions:

The actual meetings, the actual one to one meetings and face to face, work well, but then the processes that go on after that meeting to the next stage, just disappear into a void. [CWG]

Others felt that things only worked when they went 'over the heads' of local or middle managers, to MSPs, FDMs or policy advisors in FCS:

the thing that worked, that got things moving with the Forestry commission was when we brought our MSP in. [CWG]

One analysis received particular support from the community group discussion:

I think genuinely from high up, there's a commitment to community engagement [and] many of the individuals on the ground also feel that. [...] But, where it's falling down somewhere in between, either the resources haven't been put into the staff to make it happen or the processes haven't been set up for some of the procedures, so that lack of priority and consistency, so it's too much about personality and too much about luck. [CWG, emphasis added to reflect group opinion]

Many community representatives perceived this as a fault with organisational structure and communication:

It's functionally organised, people don't talk across [the functions]. [CWG]

Amongst those functions, CRT is seen as isolated:

The recreational people don't have any budget or hardly any budget and therefore don't have any power. [CWG]



If FC is serious about communities and rural development there has to be some kind of devolution of decision-making to a local level and reduction of management unit sizes. [CWG]

3.8.3. Understanding FE / FC organisation

A number of community representatives used the terms FC and FE in an interchangeable way:

To engage with the Forestry Commission or whatever we call them, you need to understand their internal organisation quite a lot. They make no attempt to simplify it, to interface with the public. [CWG]

There was considerable discussion in all four groups, about whether community groups needed to understand FCS / FES structure, but both community representatives and FES staff felt that more could be done help the purpose of different parts of the FC as an organisation, and the roles of different staff within it.

- There's general confusion, you know, with people between Forestry Commission, which is conservancy, and Forest Enterprise, which is the delivery arm.*
- And of course they're all called Forestry Commission, to the public we're all the same organisation so they don't understand how the decision-making process for example, for a design plan that is authorised by the conservancy, but the same plan's done by us, and how that differs for them.*
- And also, district level, it's not the same across the districts in terms of roles and responsibilities and job titles. So again that's caused quite a lot of confusion [in affecting whether] people know how decisions are made, who makes them, many people would find that a bit of a minefield. [group discussion, FES staff]*

3.8.4. Leading from the top

FES senior managers want to create a culture of community engagement across the organisation so that it is not seen solely as the responsibility of the CRT staff to engage. However, this culture change needs to be demonstrated clearly by senior staff who need to consider how they engage with their own staff and how much they may currently undertake or impose structures/strategies without engaging staff. The CWG and local staff perceptions indicate internal tensions and some silo working by different parts of FES, and challenges with some parts of the business that have a more traditional forestry focus.

In group discussions with CRT staff, some felt this lead from senior staff was not apparent. Others felt their FDM was supportive, but in their particular district, the Area Operations Manager was experienced as hostile to community engagement, or

the Land Agent. These three roles: FDM, Land Agent and Area Operations Manager are key roles which can influence the success of community engagement.

3.9. Learning

3.9.1. Internal learning from experience

As noted earlier in the report, there is an emphasis on the 'can-do' culture of FES, and the tendency to excel in deliver but move on quickly to the next challenge. Community groups commented:

There's a lack of willingness to accept responsibility for when things don't work possibly because it doesn't reflect well on individuals and/or organisations. There's a bit too much corporateness about things. It's spin if you like. 'We can't afford to accept that we might have made mistakes here.' [CWG]

Staff agreed:

One of the things we lack as an organisation – we are starting to do it – is lessons learnt. There is a lot of good stuff, but there is a lot we could be learning, we aren't good at sharing that, we aren't good at speaking to our neighbouring districts, chatting to see what they have been doing, there's a lot of good stuff out there, a lot of folk making the best of a limited resource. Let's face it we don't have the time so, if there is stuff we can learn from, why are we constantly reinventing the wheel? [FES]

Nevertheless some staff reflected on implicit learning:

You become a bit more comfortable when you see a community group who is being successful ... you move away from "we must be in control" and "we need things in triplicate". [FES]

In terms of training, time and resources were considered important issues with a sense of frustration accompanying this:

There's been opportunities through [Learning and Development] for some time and we have had periodic events ...but it's like all of these things, fewer people, fewer time, fewer resources, there's never enough days in the week to be able to do everything and accommodate the full staff briefing or opportunities for people to learn things on away days and so on. [FES]

Staff agreed that since devolution and the increasing separation of FCS, FCE, and FCW / NRW, there are fewer opportunities to share experiences across borders, and that this is a loss:

It's well worth looking elsewhere and not trying to be better than something that's already done and you can take it off the shelf.

3.9.2. Learning among community groups

A few CWGs also expressed a specific wish to share experiences among community groups who are working with FES / on the National Forest Estate.

One group commented on the value of reflection, for improving working relations with FES:

I think once we took some time out and had a really good look at ourselves and a good look at how Forestry operated it became a much easier process [CWG]

4. Summary of issues and options

4.1. Strengths

- There was a strong indication across a number of community groups that local staff are very helpful and committed, and are much appreciated. The great majority of participants had very positive comments about the delivery staff in particular. The majority of groups felt able to meet with FES as often as they needed to. Many examples were given of maintaining successful relationships and trust between FES and communities.
- FES delivery staff demonstrated a high level of commitment, experience, and understanding of the issues, as well as empathy with the experiences of community groups. Many groups and staff perceived a commitment to community engagement at both head office and local level within FES.
- Improvements made by FES to sites, particularly in more urban areas which suffered from under management and rubbish dumping, have helped to remove barriers to access, allowing local communities to enjoy and feel pride in their local woodlands. The visibility of FES staff on sites, often of rangers, and as a presence in communities, was highlighted in urban areas.

4.2. Weaknesses

- The biggest issue raised across all groups and stakeholder types is a profound concern about severe delays in making and following through on decisions, particularly where those decisions involve legal agreements. Long delays on preparing and signing off legal documents are often traced back to a bottleneck connected with a Land Agent.
- Organisational structures are unclear to community groups, which creates a sense of disempowerment and frustration. Community groups find it difficult to

understand who has the power to achieve what in terms of decision making and progressing engagement. Many perceive a disconnect between the enthusiasm and commitment of delivery staff, and inertia further up the management hierarchy. Linked to this are wider concerns about the power of local staff to make any kind of decision or provide clear judgements about the length of process. This can lead to unmanageable delays for community groups and the loss of volunteers or promised funding.

- Some groups are not clear what the process of engagement is beyond initial discussions with FES, the 'black box' as some call it. There is still a lack of clarity, transparency and accountability in the engagement relationships and process.
- Some FES staff (including a few who have been assigned to CRT roles) appear to be uncomfortable with community engagement. Those from a more traditional forestry background can find it difficult to work with communities where they feel that control is being ceded; or they find it difficult because of an aversion to risk and a feeling that FES can do a better woodland management job.
- High levels of staff turnover are experienced as a lack of continuity; sometimes earlier agreements are disregarded by replacement staff (or by a change of FDM), and groups often find themselves needing to explain and re-justify a situation to different staff members. Conversely staff find that they are suffering from legacy issues of poor relationships in the past; and of community groups which have made little or no progress over many years. There is a real challenge of how to move on from failing groups, and from difficult experiences in the past.
- Community groups may have unrealistic expectations of FES resources (both money and time) and underestimate the burden of obligations to meet long term maintenance costs of community developments on NFE sites. There is often resentment of 'bureaucracy', and community groups do not always understand the need for health and safety procedures.
- The organisation as a whole is experienced as failing to understand and value volunteers' knowledge, priorities and time availability. This is interpreted as indicating low commitment to community engagement. Procurement and changing attitudes to local and community contractors is a significant source of resentment.
- There is great variety in the structure and job descriptions of the CRT (or equivalent) team in each district, and little perception of 'leading from the top'. CRT staff do not, on the whole, feel supported in by their line managers; there is a widespread sense that community engagement is a low priority. This varies between districts. Related to this is a common experience that only CRT staff are responsible for community engagement, and that conversely operations and

planning staff have no responsibilities towards communities. CRT staff commonly experience their role as a “complaints department”, rather than making more positive and productive use of CRT expertise.

- There is a strong culture with FES of a ‘doing’ organisation that prides itself on delivery, and this can cut across the need to allow community engagement to develop at its own pace. It can also lead to some degree of over-commitment among staff.
- There is a lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation process across all districts. This could be used to inform changes and allow FES to adapt when engagement is not going well with particular groups. More generally, learning and reflection is not seen as a strength of FES.

4.3. Options

1. Mainstream ‘community engagement’ values throughout FES, from Head Office to FDMs to delivery staff, and across functions, from Operations to Land Agents and CRT staff. Both FESHO and FDMs need to give clear and consistent support and priority to community engagement. Consistency between districts, based on an explicit direction for community engagement at national level. Differences in approach between districts should be related to different social needs rather than personalities and preferences of district staff. Consider separating the ‘community’ function from ‘recreation and tourism’, and establish community engagement champions at national level and in every district.
2. Extend training in engagement to all staff. Refresher training is helpful to existing CRT staff, and further training for some in CRT posts who may have been assigned to them unwillingly. Develop a consistent approach to reflection, learning from experience and sharing good practice. For example staff could have face-to-face meetings and / or video conferences to discuss community engagement. A new focus on community engagement would require a range of staff to attend who were undertaking different roles (ops, conservation, planning etc). FDM could nominate people to represent their areas on a rolling basis.
3. Clarify the range of meanings of ‘community engagement’, develop a clear way of distinguishing between different types of groups and engagement, and agreements that are appropriate to each type.
4. Produce templates of the different types of agreements so that everyone knows what to expect, and develop a transparent process (including timeframe) for signing them off. Consider policies developed elsewhere particularly the ‘Woodlands and You’ approach which has been well received by community groups in Wales. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8J2GJ9>. Ensure all agreements are respected in the same way as a commercial contract would be. There needs to be a visible shift in organisational commitment to ensure that existing agreements are

respected, or where change is needed, this is addressed explicitly, transparently and quickly.

5. Address the land agent role, and develop procedures and targets to drastically improve rates of agreements; consider appointing a dedicated community land agent to process all agreements, contracts and leases. An organisational target would be valuable here.
6. Communicate more clearly what FCS / FES are, what they do, and what kinds of roles the staff do. Invest in clearer communication about what FES can and can't do, what resources it has to achieve community engagement, and the limits to that. Review ways of presenting and communicating requirements that are often labelled as 'bureaucracy'. Whether fairly or not, FES is seen as responsible for these demands, and they adversely affect its image and reputation. Consider whether requirements around health and safety, and qualifications, are applied consistently, proportionately and transparently – and take action to ensure that they are. Develop clear messages so that community representatives know what to expect, understand the reasons for these requirements, and appreciate their source. Develop a resource to signpost communities to training e.g. chainsaw etc.
7. Set up internal systems to help monitor community engagement, and ensure progress. Establish clear definitions of types of engagement and groups. Facilitate continuity when staff change, by establishing a record of interaction and agreements with each group, and a 'traffic light' system to monitor progress and prioritise actions.
8. Deal with all aspects of engagement as a coherent area of work, to include public engagement on forest design plans, user groups for recreational, health and well-being purposes, as well as the more tightly defined 'community groups'. Particularly in urban and more populated areas, recognise and acknowledge the value of the ranger service and importance of 'being seen in the woods' by communities.

5. References

- Ambrose-Oji, B., P. Tabbush, C. Carter, B. Frost, and K. S. Fielding. 2011. "Public Engagement in Forestry: A toolbox for public participation in forest and woodland planning.," Forestry Commission, Edinburgh. .
- Forestry Commission Scotland (2013) The role of Scotland's National Forest Estate and strategic directions. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/strategicdirections>.

Annex 1. Methods

Sample

A master-list which compiled District records of the community groups with which FES was involved or in contact, identified a total of 73. All were sent an invitation to participate in group discussions or interviews. Twenty-eight community representatives (representing 26 groups) responded and were included in the sample. As discussed in the main report, these included a mixture of NGOs, CWGs and WUGs. The Steering Group was keen to ensure that a wide range of experiences were included in the study and so efforts were made by FCS and FES to identify 'disengaged' groups, which were also contacted with requests for interviews.

Semi-structured guide questions

A set of semi-structured schedule of questions was developed for use with FES staff, and with community representatives. Two sets of interview guides were developed iteratively in collaboration with the Steering Group before being finalised. The interview guides for staff and community were organised under similar themes and issues, in a way that would allow 'read across' between the different stakeholders. The topics covered were:

- introductory information about the respondent and the type of engagement relationship/role they were involved with
- What successful engagement looked like – things that went well
- What if any challenges there were – things that don't go so well
- Support, training and monitoring and evaluation of engagement
- Chances for change – suggestions for overcoming challenges
- The future – where is engagement moving to within FES, how does the community see the sustainability of its activities and engagement relationships.

These interview guides formed the basis of both group discussions and telephone interviews.

Group discussions

Group discussions for FES staff and representatives of community groups were organised in Inverness and Stirling. The choice of a highland and lowland venue was designed to encourage access and participation from as many community groups as possible. Invitations to community groups were issued six weeks in advance of the meetings, and follow-up reminders were sent to encourage

participation. Staff groups were organised in the morning and community group discussion in the afternoon. The group discussions were conducted using the interview schedules included as Annex 1 and Annex 2.

The group discussions were recorded and transcribed, and the text was subject to content analysis and screened for emerging themes. These discussions provided particular value because the dynamic of interaction between group participants provided further insights and enabled the researchers to cross-check hypotheses with participants. For example, the groups were able to reflect on reasons why they did not all agree on responses to particular questions.

Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews were organised with a range of different stakeholders who were not able to attend the group discussions:

- Representatives of community groups unable to attend the group discussions
- Representatives of communities and groups characterised as “disengaged”
- Senior FES staff not invited to the group discussions but holding a strategic view and understanding of FES engagement.

Interviews were conducted using schedules adapted from those used in the group discussions. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed in the same way as the group discussion interview scripts.

‘Dimensions of engagement’ scoring exercise

The study is a follow up to one conducted in 2002 by Mary Hobley. To maintain the link with the earlier evaluation, we developed a matrix scoring exercise based on six dimensions of engagement promoted in the 2002 report.

The aims of this scoring exercise were to

- 1 act as an interview device that systematically elicited discussion and information about the detail of engagement relationships. This evidence was recorded in the transcripts and was analysed as in section 2.1.
- 2 provide all participants in the group discussions with an equal chance of expressing individual views and experiences of engagement with FES. Using the scoring method overcomes the limitation often experienced in qualitative group interviews, of more confident participants dominating the views put forward
- 3 facilitate a quantitative comparison of perceptions between stakeholders and between the views of participants interviewed using different methods. The quantitative assessment was carried out using Excel crosstabs based on count data.

An explanation of the definition of each of the dimensions was provided as shown in Table 4. This is a slight variation on the Hobley (2002) descriptions, but provided wording that more clearly articulated current understanding of these principles. Respondents were asked to score FES-community relationships against each of the dimensions using a LIKERT type scale (1 = poor through to 5 = fantastic).

There was some confusion during the scoring about whether it was the performance of FES or the performance of the community which was being assessed, rather than the intended assessment of the nature of the engagement relationship between FES and the community as a whole. In this regard, many participants found the evaluation of 'representative' particularly difficult. Also some participants pointed out that assigning a single score was difficult when things changed over time, for example, they sometimes felt empowered, but less so at other times i.e. there was an evolution and change in the dimensions of engagement that could wax and wane. One participant in the telephone interviews, one NGO and two FES staff in the workshops did not complete an individual set of scores.

Although there were limitations with the exercise, it did aid the focus group discussion and draw out the detail of engagement issues. It also achieved the objective of providing a basis for comparative analysis between FES staff and community groups, as well as a more inclusive view than provided by the narrative of group discussion alone.

Table 4. Defining the dimensions of engagement (after Hobley, 2002)

Dimension	Definition
Transparent	In the relationship between FES/the community everyone knows how decisions are made and who makes them
Accountable	In the relationship between FES/the community those who make decisions (your group and FES staff) regularly consider and make available a record of what has been achieved or how things could be done better
Comprehensive/ Inclusive	In the relationship between FES/the community all interest groups and sectors of the community are consulted from the outset and have a chance to contribute
Representative	In the relationship between FES/the community the main decision-makers are representative of all interest groups
Informed	In the relationship between FES/the community all interest groups involved understand the objectives and processes of engagement, and have access to information as and when they need it
Empowered	In the relationship between FES/the community you can actively participate if you wish to and are helped to do so

Participant background information

Short questionnaires were used to document additional information about FES staff and community groups/NGOs who participated in the workshop. These are included as Annex 3 and 4. The forms asked FES staff for more information about: their roles, the provision of training and support, the guidance they used, and how they assessed the success of community engagement.

Participants were asked more about who they felt they were representing, how they interacted with FES, and what activities they undertook. This data was analysed using descriptive statistics and count data, to describe the sample in greater detail and provide additional evidence around the emerging themes and dimensions of engagement. While responses were brief and on-the-spot, participants were aware beforehand that the questionnaires would be presented as part of the event. They represent the responses of participants rather than definitive policy statements from their organisations.

Additional sources of information

Community representatives who attended the group discussions, or who replied to initial contacts with the Forestry for People Panel, were encouraged to submit any other information or material they thought was relevant. This elicited three email responses which were treated in the same way as the interview transcripts.



Annex 2. Interview Guide for FES Staff Group Discussion

1. Intro

- who we are, aims of the afternoon, confidentiality, ok with recording?
- questions / clarifications
- introductions – job title, district / office, and example of ways you have engaged with a community

2. Describing experiences

Each participant invited to talk about:

- what did you seek to achieve
- how was the forest district involved
- how did it go

encourage members to question each other, compare experiences

Supplementary questions

- where did the initiative come from (community group or FD)
- change over e.g. 10 years / how?
- Awareness of different types of engagement
- probe around different stages in engagement (process explained and manageable, inclusivity, defining the problem, support in implementation, decision making approach)
- appropriate /satisfying level of involvement

3. What success looks like

Following discussion of how they engage with communities and work undertaken – probe around different stages in engagement (process explained and manageable, inclusivity, defining the problem, support in implementation, decision making approach):

- what does successful engagement look like to you
- what is more challenging – why? Examples
- what do you think works well – why? Examples?
- monitoring community engagement – how do you know “how much” “what kind (of engagement)” and “so what”?

4. Scoring exercise

Thinking about community engagement, and all the aspects we have discussed, please score how your experience of community engagement in relation to the following:

1. Transparent - everyone knows how decisions are made and who makes them



2. Accountable - those who make decisions regularly consider and make available a record of what has been achieved or how things could be done better
3. Comprehensive and Inclusive - all interest groups and sectors of the community are consulted from the outset and have a chance to contribute
4. Representative - decision-makers are representative of all interest groups
5. Informed - all interest groups understand the objectives and processes, and have access to information as and when they need it
6. Empowered - all groups in the community can actively participate if they wish and are helped to do so

Please score from 1 (poor) to 5 (fantastic)

Discuss results, encourage interaction around this – including diversity

5. Skills and planning

Now we'd like to discuss how prepared you feel for community engagement e.g.

- how is community engagement reflected in your FJPs? Is it just an 'outcome' or linked to FC/FE organisational competencies?
- what training have you had [probe for engagement toolkit, UKFS F&P guidelines, any others?]
- how well prepared do you feel? How supported do you feel in carrying out community engagement?
- opportunities for learning and sharing experiences e.g. with other FD's or workshop or visits / case studies
- is it properly resourced / what more is needed
- when it comes to motivation to do community engagement, whose goals do you feel these are? Whose indicators? Do you feel ownership or is it just handed down from Head Office?

6. Looking ahead

We'd like to pull together what we've been discussing, and hear about your suggestions for future engagement. E.g.

- can you prioritise any issues you've mentioned?
- discuss ways to solve problems raised, scope out options and alternative ways of working to address issues e.g. more optimistic look to the future
- other activities / initiatives that would be beneficial to your community e.g. woodfuel supply etc.?

Annex 3. Interview Guide for Community Group Discussion

1. Intro

- who we are, aims of the afternoon, confidentiality, ok with recording?
- questions / clarifications
- introductions – name, place, and group – aim of group

2. Describing experiences

Each participant invited to say something about:

- what did you seek to achieve
- how was the forest district involved
- how did it go

encourage members to question each other, compare experiences

Supplementary questions

- where did the initiative come from (community group or FD)
- change over e.g. 10 years / how?
- different types of engagement
- probe around different stages in engagement (process explained and manageable, inclusivity, defining the problem, support in implementation, decision making approach)
- aware of options
- appropriate level of support
- appropriate /satisfying level of involvement

3. What did you like most about your engagement with FE/FD?

- Or – what has been good about this experience
- Or – do you think members of your group / community are happy with the experience

4. What didn't you like about your engagement with FE/FD?

- what has not been good about this experience

Supplementary:

- How could this be improved?

5. What worked well, and why? Examples?

6. What didn't work well, and why? Examples

Supplementary:

- How could this be improved?

Supplementary:

- How responsive to your ideas/requests do you feel the FD have been?
- Do you feel you knew who to contact about particular issues and that they would be responsive to you?

7. How do you think your project will fare in the future?

Supplementary:

- Long term involvement of community members?

8. What does a successful outcome look like?

Supplementary:

- how can you tell if it's been successful?)
- Do you measure your success, and if so, how
- who do you share that information with?

Annex 4. Participant Information: FES staff

FOREST DISTRICT INFORMATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

It would be very helpful to us to understand a little more about the FES staff that are represented at the discussion today. Please could you respond to the questions below? The answers you give will help us to understand the range of experiences captured in the discussion. This information will be used to summarise who attended in terms of role type, and help the researchers interpret the information collected during the group discussion.

1. A bit of background information about your role

- What is your current role?
- How long have you had this role?
- How long have you worked with Forest Enterprise?
- What (if any) was your previous role?
- Did that previous role involve community engagement?

2. Information about how community engagement is managed in your role

Is your community engagement work included in your FJP?

- YES NO

If it is, who decides on the target indicators? (Please tick one)

- Me
- My line manager
- Myself and my line manager
- My team has an agreed engagement plan, and my targets come from that

What kind of indicators are included? (Please tick all that apply)

- Process, e.g. decision making processes established and meetings conducted, stakeholders involvement
- Product, e.g. number of community activities, number of participants at meetings, number of agreements signed
- Behaviour, e.g. changes in attitudes and perceptions, more people using facilities, better working relationships, increased numbers of visitors
- Outcome, e.g. levels of income generated for community use, improved levels of wellbeing, greater community cohesion

Do you and your colleagues have ways of evaluating your community engagement work?

- Yes we have regular team meetings to discuss community engagement issues, learn and problem solve together
- Yes we have occasional team meetings to discuss community engagement issues, learn and problem solve together
- Yes we have team meetings when there are particular issues that benefit from group discussion or require group planning
- Yes we have team meetings when we need to react to particular situations and act quickly
- No I tend to work independently and evaluate my own progress and experiences with communities and community groups

3. Information about support for community engagement in your role

Can you list the OGBs (if any) you use to guide your community engagement work?

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.....

.....

Can you list any other guides, toolkits or materials you use to help you in your community engagement work?

.....

.....

.....

Have you received any training to help you with your community engagement work? If so can you list what this was.

.....

.....

.....

Do you received any other support with your community engagement work? If so can you list what this is.

.....

.....

.....

Annex 5. Participant Information: Community Groups

GROUP INFORMATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

It would be very helpful to us to understand a little more about the groups who are represented at the discussion today. Please could you respond to the questions below? The answers you give will help us to understand the range of experiences captured in the discussion. This information will be used to summarise features of the groups who have attended, and help the researchers interpret the information collected during the group discussion.

1. A bit of background information about your group

When was your group established?

Do you have a formal constitution? YES NO

Roughly how many members do you have?

What kind of group are you? (Please tick all that apply)

- Company
- Co-operative
- Charity
- Social enterprise
- Trust
- None of the above
- Other (please say what)

What type of people are involved in **the group** itself e.g. coming to meetings, helping to organise events, taking part in decision making? (Please tick all that apply)

- Young adults
- Older people
- Different ethnic groups
- Different income groups
- Men
- Women
- People living with disabilities

Who do you feel your group represents?

.....
.....

2. Information about what your group does

What kinds of activities is your group involved with? (Please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland management | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities management (e.g. recreation) | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Operating a business | <input type="checkbox"/> Health improvement |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation |



Who gets involved **in the activities** you organise?

- Local people
- Visitors from further away?
- Local people and visitors

What type of people get involved in **the activities** you organise?

- People from all backgrounds (men and women, children, young adults and older people, different ethnic groups, people from different social classes etc)
- A specific group of people (e.g. children, young adults, women's group a specific community of interest for example a heritage or environment project etc.)

3. Information about the kind of engagement you are involved with

How do you engage with Forest Enterprise (aka Forestry Commission) Scotland? (Please tick all that apply)

- Taking part in consultations
- Taking part in activities organised by Forest Enterprise
- Helping to plan activities organised by Forest Enterprise
- Helping to manage activities organised by Forest Enterprise
- Planning activities organised by your group in Forest Enterprise woodlands
- Managing activities organised by your group in Forest Enterprise woodlands
- Taking part in forest design planning with Forest Enterprise
- Managing the forest in partnership with Forest Enterprise
- Managing the forest for Forest Enterprise
- Leasing the woodland from Forest Enterprise
- Owning the forest land or working towards ownership of the forest land
- Other (please explain)

.....
.....

What type of agreement (if any) do you have with Forest Enterprise Scotland?

.....
.....

How often do you tend to meet with Forest Enterprise staff?

- Regularly
- Rarely
- Whenever we need to

Why do you tend to meet with Forest Enterprise staff?

- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Informal conversations
- Sharing ideas
- Making and discussing requests
- Receiving news about the forest