The ‘Woodlands and You’ scheme in Wales: Understanding it’s uptake by communities

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**Cover image:** Evening sun through trees on the lower slopes of Cadair Idris © Zena Wilmot

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We also wish to express our gratitude to all the Community Woodland Groups who patiently answered our questions, and shared their experiences and insights.
**Acronyms**

AM  Assembly Member  
CR  Community Ranger (NRW)  
CROW  Countryside & Rights of Way act 2000  
CWA  Community Woodlands Association (Scotland)  
CWG  Community Woodland Group  
FCW  Forestry Commission Wales  
FDP  Forest Design Plan  
FDM  Forest District Manager (NRW)  
LAM  Local Area Manager (NRW)  
LlyG  Llais y Goedwig  
MoU  Memorandum of Understanding  
NRW  Natural Resources Wales  
WaY  Woodlands and You  
WG  Welsh Government

**Terminology**

**Community Woodlands:** Any woodland where the local community has some degree of control over how the woodland is run or managed.

**Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE):** the public woodland estate managed by NRW on behalf of the Welsh Government.

**Forestry Commission Wales (FCW):** The body responsible for managing the WGWE prior to the creation of Natural Resources Wales in 2013.

**Natural Resources Wales (NRW):** A Welsh Government Sponsored Body established in 2013, bringing together FCW, the Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Agency Wales. Its purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future.

**Forest District:** The FC Wales administrative unit still currently in use in NRW. The 4 districts are: Coed y Mynydd (CyM), Coed y Gororau (Llanymddyfri (Lla) and Coed y Cymoedd (CyC).

**Forest Research:** A UK wide research organization that provides the evidence base for UK forestry practices and supports forestry’s contribution to UK governmental policies.

**Llais y Goedwig:** A voluntary association to represent and support community woodland groups in Wales through networking, resources, profile raising and policy engagement.

**Woodlands and You (WaY):** Natural Resources Wales’ scheme for enabling individuals, enterprises and communities to use the WGWE for activities or events (through permits) and longer term projects (through Management Agreement s and Leases).
# Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 5

1. Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 6
  1.1. Background ................................................................................................................ 6
  1.2. Aim of the Study ......................................................................................................... 7
  1.3. Scope .......................................................................................................................... 7

2. Context ............................................................................................................................. 9
  2.1. The Welsh Government Woodland Estate ................................................................. 9
  2.2. Community Involvement ......................................................................................... 10
  2.3. Community Woodlands .......................................................................................... 11

3. Woodlands and You ....................................................................................................... 13
  3.1. The Development of WaY ....................................................................................... 13
  3.2. The WaY Process ...................................................................................................... 15
  3.3. Corporate Support for WaY implementation ........................................................... 17

4. Methodology .................................................................................................................. 21
  4.1. Data on WaY collected by NRW since 2011 ........................................................... 21
  4.2. Interviews with NRW staff involved in WaY ............................................................. 22
  4.3. Interviews with community groups ‘involved’ in WaY ............................................ 22
  4.4. Additional discussions with stakeholders ................................................................. 23
  4.5. Constraints ............................................................................................................... 23

5. Results ............................................................................................................................. 24
  5.1. WaY Data (collected by NRW) Analysis Results ...................................................... 24
  5.2. NRW Staff Interview Results .................................................................................. 29
  5.3. Community Woodland Group interview results ...................................................... 47

6. Discussion and Recommendations ................................................................................. 70
  6.1. Discussion Points ...................................................................................................... 70
  6.2. Recommendations .................................................................................................... 76

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 80

Appendices ......................................................................................................................... 81
  Appendix 1: Typology of Community Involvement ...................................................... 81
  Appendix 2: Welsh Government Woodlands for Wales Indicators 2013-14 for Community Involvement ................................................................. 82
  Appendix 3: Legal framework ......................................................................................... 83
  Appendix 4: Script and interview form for NRW staff .................................................. 85
  Appendix 5: Interview script for community projects involved in the WGWE ............... 87
  Appendix 6: Community groups involved in the WGWE interviewed for the study ...... 89
  Appendix 7: NRW District Data on WaY management agreements and leases .............. 91
  Appendix 8: NRW WaY Forum Terms of Reference ...................................................... 92

4
Executive Summary

1. The Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE) represents 37% of Welsh woodlands. NRW’s Woodlands and You (WaY) scheme, launched in 2011, enables communities and social enterprises to operate long term projects through Management Agreements and Leases.

2. In 2013 Llais y Goedwig learnt that the uptake of WaY for long term projects by communities was ‘low’. With NRW support, we determined to work with NRW staff and local communities to try to understand the level of community uptake of WaY for projects on the WGWE.

3. The data held by NRW on WaY at the Forest District level is patchy and incomplete. Neither NRW nor Llais y Goedwig can say with certainty how many communities have entered into Management Agreements or Leases with FCW/NRW for projects on the WGWE since 2011.

4. Our ‘best guess’ estimate of community uptake of WaY is 13 management agreements and leases approved since the start of WaY and 6 management agreements currently in negotiation. These agreements include community woodland management projects, also a number of walking trails, cabins, toilet and car park management, play areas and social enterprises to improve youth employability.

5. Across Wales, the NRW Forest District staff interviewed by Llais y Goedwig described the level of uptake of WaY projects by communities as: ‘low’, ‘disappointing’, and ‘reasonable’.

6. Communities report that NRW district staff are generally helpful and accommodating.

7. Many possible explanations for the low uptake were identified, including:
   - It is not clear from the current NRW corporate plan what NRW’s position on encouraging community involvement on the WGWE is.
   - There is no promotion/basic publicity of WaY or its benefits
   - WaY is an NRW scheme (primarily for Permissions) not a programme. It is not adequately resourced nor is it adequately monitored or reported on.
   - There is no demand from communities for more responsibility
   - Inconsistent advice on tangible benefits (eg firewood) or woodland management rights
   - Lack of accessible local woodlands
   - Limited staff with community development background

8. WaY is an important initiative. But without changes to WaY, the level of community involvement in long term projects on the WGWE may not increase beyond a ‘trickles’ anytime soon. The report includes a set of 20 recommendations for NRW to review in order to maximise the potential of WaY for communities and social enterprises.
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Woodlands and You (WaY) is a landmark scheme that aims to enable communities and social enterprises across Wales to gain the greatest possible benefit from the Welsh Government’s Woodland Estate (WGWE) (FCW, 2012).

Launched by FCW in June 2011, WaY sets out the process by which individuals, organisations, including community groups and social enterprises, can bring forward their ideas for events, activities and longer term projects on the WGWE managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

This report focuses on the most innovative aspect of WaY; the granting of Management Agreements\(^1\) and Leases to community groups and social enterprises\(^2\) for longer term projects on the WGWE.

Interest in community woodlands has been steadily growing in Wales. While still modest in numbers, community woodlands are proving to be a permanent feature of the Welsh woodland landscape. Woodlands managed by communities in Wales are diverse and can be owned outright, leased, or managed under an agreement with the land owner.

By mid-2013, WaY had been operational for 2 years; Llais y Goedwig was keen\(^3\) to find out how many community groups had used WaY to enter into Agreements or Leases with NRW\(^4\). We learnt that the uptake of WaY by local communities appeared to be ‘low’\(^5\) with few Agreements or Leases issued.

Llais y Goedwig determined to find out why the uptake of WaY (projects) by communities was low. NRW also saw the value in understanding the level of community uptake and pledged additional funding and support\(^6\) in autumn 2013. The report presents the findings of this research.

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1. Activities and events that require permission are, on approval, granted a Permit under WaY
2. Management Agreements and Leases are not granted exclusively to community groups; this is our interest
3. The question arose during a visit by international foresters to Longwood Community Woodland who wanted to understand the process of woodland asset transfer to communities in Wales.
4. Llais y Goedwig member community woodland groups (26% of members) operate on the Woodland Estate
5. Per communication from Barbara Anglezarke summer 2013
6. NRW provided funds of £1,500 and worked with LlG to refine the study objectives, to provide information on WaY and to encourage NRW staff to speak with the researchers.
1.2. **Aim of the Study**

To further our understanding of how the WaY scheme has worked to date, in particular to identify any gaps or blockages that make it difficult for community groups to make the most of the opportunities provided by WaY, with the overall aim of finding ways to increase the use of WaY by communities for long-term projects on the WGWE. Our specific study objectives were:

- To understand the process by which communities can currently find out about opportunities and gain access to the WGWE through WaY, in particular through Management Agreements, Leases and Sales.
- To ‘unpick’ what was happening at the different levels of community involvement in Welsh woodlands (Permissions, Management Agreements, Leases and Sales).
- To look at international examples of programmes designed to ensure community access to the WGWE.
- To work with all parties to understand the current situation and inform future development.

1.3. **Scope**

In line with the aims of this report, the main focus is on events and projects on the WGWE where a local community-based or community-led organisation has taken the initiative or is taking major decisions about planning an activity or event or project. The many opportunities that other organisations provide for local people to ‘take part’ in activities on the WGWE, for instance conservation volunteering days organised by Wildlife Trusts are beyond the scope of this report.

It is notoriously difficult (and at times unnecessarily limiting) to define what is or is not a community based group. As will become apparent in later sections, for the purposes of this report a broad view has been taken that encompasses both communities of interest and communities of place.

The study has been done on a modest budget supplemented by voluntary inputs; Llais y Goedwig was unable to visit the NRW Forest Districts to see the WaY projects first hand and may therefore not have always correctly understood which projects are community based.

Some of the data on WaY supplied by NRW was incomplete and patchy, varied in quality between Forest Districts and became available over a period of months. Resource limitations meant Llais y Goedwig could not re-contact District staff to clarification as new data became available.
This report aims to give an evidence based view of the situation in Wales in 2014; it cannot claim to be comprehensive or to distinguish between different areas of Wales or different forest types.

Please contact Llais y Goedwig if there are any issues, errors or omissions in the report in order that they may be corrected.
2. Context

2.1. The Welsh Government Woodland Estate

The WGWE occupies 6% of the land area of Wales and represents 37% of Welsh woodland. It consists of 109,564 hectares of woodland and 14,568 hectares of other land, including farmland, quarries, buildings and open water\(^7\) (FC Wales, 2011). The majority of the woodlands are Freehold but there are also significant areas that are Leasehold.

![Figure 2: The Welsh Government Woodland Estate (freehold and Leasehold)](image)

The woodlands are managed by NRW for the ‘public good’ and held in trust by the Welsh Ministers for the people of Wales. The woodlands provide a substantial resource for local people in terms of opportunities for recreation and amenity, health and well-being, woodland products, skills and employment.

In Wales many people (in excess of 3.5 million annually) visit the WGWE to walk, to mountain bike, to picnic, to take part in Forest School and many other activities and to enjoy the facilities at Visitor Centres and Forest Parks.

In 2014 the Forestry Commission estimated that the Welsh Government estate was made up of 98,000 ha of conifers and 19,000 ha of broadleaf woods (total 117,000 ha)\(^8\). While much of the estate is in large blocks of coniferous production forest, often in areas of low population, there are also smaller blocks of woodlands, some of which are regarded as underutilised or under managed and can include mixed broadleaf and coniferous stock\(^9\).

### 2.2. Community Involvement

What does ‘community involvement’ in woodlands mean in Wales? The Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy (2009)\(^10\) sets out the Welsh Government’s long term aspirations for all Welsh trees and woodlands. At the heart of the Strategy are 20 desired Strategic Outcomes, including a commitment to ensuring “More communities involved (sic) in the decision making and management of woodlands so that woodlands deliver greater benefits at a community level.” (WG, 2009).

The outcomes are measured using WfW Indicators and an annual report issued on progress. The 6 WfW Indicators for community involvement are:

1. **Involvement in Woodlands Indicators:** (a) Consultation in woodland plans (% adults), (b) Membership of woodland community groups (%adults), (c) Involvement in woodland education (% households), (d) Involvement in woodland volunteering (% adults).
2. **Community Groups Indicators:** (e) Number of active community woodland groups, (f) Area of land Leased or owned by Community Woodland Groups (ha).

A 2010 ‘Policy Position on Community Involvement with Welsh Woodlands’ identifies the actions required to implement the WfW commitment and defines community involvement as; “the processes, outcomes and governance structures associated with the use of woodlands in Wales, for delivering community benefits. The term ‘community’ refers here to either a geographical community where the common issues are those of the locality or to a community of interest or identity where the common issues are not spatial. ‘Involvement’ refers here to the full spectrum of involvement from engagement in public consultation through to hands-on management of woodlands and the establishment of woodland-based social enterprises” (WG, 2010).

The Policy Position also stated that “There is no one preferred level of community involvement. We encourage third sector involvement in woodland management on the assumption that it leads to better quality woodlands and yields greater benefits to local people. It should be possible to facilitate any level of involvement, as long as it delivers more benefits.” (WG, 2010)

The Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework (WG, 2013), states that, “The [Environment and Sustainable Development] Department is working with its funded bodies to develop a concerted approach to community-engagement and support, and will charge the new NR Body (NRW) with close engagement with local communities in identifying the opportunities available to them.”

The Environment Bill White Paper (2014) states in connection with ‘what we want to achieve for communities and to tackle poverty’ that ‘there are clear connections between tackling poverty and the use of natural resources. The proposals for an area-based approach will ensure that we have the

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\(^9\) Personal Communication, Richard Davies, 2013

\(^10\) Woodlands for Wales sets out the WG’s aims and objectives for all woodlands and trees in Wales Woodlands for People is one of 4 key strategic themes in the strategy.
right information on the challenges and opportunities in different areas. This evidence will help inform decisions on how we can improve our environment for our communities—particularly in deprived areas.\(^{11}\) The White Paper also proposes to give NRW the power to enter into Management Agreements with landowners or businesses.

Forest Research UK has developed a ‘spectrum’ of community involvement in UK forestry to help understand the different forms it can take.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Partnership (Collaborate)</th>
<th>Empower (Control)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest management plan</td>
<td>Health improvement activities e.g. health walks</td>
<td>Learning activities e.g. Forest School</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Community woodland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 3: Community participation framework (Ambrose-Oji, 2011)](image)

2.3. Community Woodlands

In Wales, community woodland generally refers to any woodland where a local community ‘group\(^{12}\) has some degree of control over how the woodland is run or managed. The woodland may be owned or Leased by the community group, or it may be managed in partnership with another organisation (usually the landowner) through a Management Agreement. A key defining feature is that the benefits arising from the management of the woodlands are shared\(^{13}\).

Each Community Woodland Group (CWG) emerges from a unique set of circumstances, reflecting the woodlands’ size and composition, the individuals involved, local concerns and opportunities. In each case the benefits of taking on the additional responsibility seem to outweigh the costs. Commonly cited reasons for creation of community woodlands are:

- To save a woodland that is under threat
- To manage the woodland differently; for instance to create local jobs
- To create a source of sustainable wood products for a local economy
- To create new facilities for local activities

In 2010, a survey of community woodlands in Wales (Wavehill, 2010) identified 138 active groups.\(^{14}\) Wavehill (2010) reported that the majority of community woodlands are 5 hectares or less and cover an estimated 1,795 ha of woodland in Wales.

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12 Groups can be formally constituted in many ways, including as charities, companies or co-operatives.
13 Source: Llais y Goedwig website.
14 The authors suggested this was likely to be an underestimate (Wavehill, 2010).
The Wavehill survey found that 73% of the groups surveyed did not own their woodland but had an agreement with the landowner; 10% of the 110 groups surveyed were on NRW managed land, 67% on Local Authority land, 15% on private land, 1% on Woodland Trust land and 7% other.

Wavehill, (2010) suggested that: “The fact that CWGs are currently only active in about 0.6% of the woodlands in Wales suggests that there is indeed scope for further development. The small number of CWGs compared to the number of third sector organisations in Wales suggests the same”.

At a policy level, community woodlands can be viewed as a means to deliver multiple benefits from job creation to health and wellbeing. A recent Forest Research UK Review of the impacts of community woodlands (Lawrence, 2014) concluded that there was evidence of positive environmental and social impacts from the establishment of community woodlands.

The Forest Research (2014) review found that community woodlands improved woodland quality through: improved management, increased community access, and increased community perception of environmental and woodland quality. It found social impacts such as: self-reported health and wellbeing benefits, creating a more pleasant place to live and economic impacts including job creation and income generation from products and services. In terms of community participation the evidence was less robust, there is however a body of qualitative evidence such as case studies that points to impacts on community cohesion, empowerment, and decision-making.

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Long Wood Community Woodland building team  
Penllegare Community Woodland volunteers  
Llangattock Community Woodland work day  
Golygfa Gwydyr Community Woodland arts  

Figure 4: Montage of community woodland activities in Wales

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15 In Wales economic impact is minimal with an average of around £580 per CWG per annum (Wavehill, 2010)  
16 Llais y Goedwig case studies. www.llaisygoedwig.org.uk/resources/llyg-publications/
3. Woodlands and You

FCW launched the Woodlands and You (WaY) scheme in June 2011. WaY sets out a process for community groups, individuals and social enterprises to bring forward their ideas for events, activities and longer term projects on the WGWE (WG, 2012).

WaY encourages individuals and organisations to submit ideas across a very wide range of activities; from one-off events such as arts projects or woodland festivals (supported by a Permit\(^\text{17}\)) to long-term community woodland projects under Management Agreement s or Leases.

3.1. The Development of WaY

Prior to WaY, the guidance for ‘permissions’ covering a range of activities on the Estate was set out by the FCW Estate Management Division, FCGB\(^\text{18}\) in the Estates Code\(^\text{19}\). The interpretation of this guidance and the granting of permissions was the responsibility of FC Wales Forest District staff. Applicants applied in a letter, sometimes with a map (often hand drawn) and a Risk Assessment. Firewood scavenging permits and moss collection were also dealt with by the Forest Districts. These Permissions and Permits tended to be locally negotiated and there were variations in the granting of Permissions across the different Forest Districts.

In 2001, the Cydcoed\(^\text{20}\) funding programme began; it ran until 2008 providing 100% funding to community groups to run woodland projects. Cydcoed created a sudden increase in demand for permission to undertake longer term projects on the WGWE, in particular infrastructure projects; FCW responded by negotiating Management Agreements for these projects.

One Cydcoed supported group, Long Wood Community Woodland, wanted much more management control over their local FCW woodland. This triggered a more in-depth look at the options for local management of FCW woodlands. An initial investigation concluded that the Forestry Act (1967) prohibited the passing of management responsibilities to another party.

Elin Jones (AM), the Long Wood AM and then Minister for Rural Affairs, asked FC Wales to “take forward Pathfinder Projects to explore the issues surrounding the transfer of management responsibility to community groups through Leases or Management Agreement s.”\(^\text{21}\) In 2009 in response to the Ministerial request, demand from the community woodland groups and Llais y Goedwig, FCW established three Pathfinder Projects\(^\text{22}\) each of which was individually negotiated with a Community Woodlands Group (WG, 2010).

\(\uparrow\) Activities and events supported by a permit are generally known as ‘permissions’.
\(^\text{18}\) Forestry Commission Great Britain.
\(^\text{19}\) Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 25\(^{th}\) July 2014.
\(^\text{20}\) Cydcoed was a £16 million programme funded through the EU Objective 1 programme and the WAG’s Pathways to Prosperity scheme. Funded in two phases (2001-2004; 2003-2008), Cydcoed gave 100% grants to 163 community groups across Objective 1 (West Wales & the Valleys). Cydcoed’s aims were to use community forestry to deliver social inclusion & create social capital; to help create and maintain high capacity community groups able to influence decisions about their locality; woods that provide long term social, economic & environmental benefits and; individuals able to play a positive role in their communities (Owen, 2008).
\(^\text{21}\) Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 25\(^{th}\) July 2014.
\(^\text{22}\) A final report on the Pathfinder projects is not available.
The Pathfinders’ overall objective was to explore the implications of higher levels of community involvement in the management of the WGWE. The Pathfinder projects focused on 3 Community Woodland Groups with ongoing negotiations with FC Wales: Golygfa Gwydyr, Long Wood, Coetir Mynydd (Parc y Bwlch). See Fig. 5 for a summary of the outcome of this process. In 2010 more groups were invited to become Pathfinders but none come forward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Woodland Group</th>
<th>Desired woodland management outcome for the group</th>
<th>Actual outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Wood Community Woodland (community co-operative)</td>
<td>Lease / Purchase&lt;br&gt;The group wanted to be able to harvest timber, generate income and create local employment from the FCW woodland. The group felt that it was not right that the timber should leave the area.</td>
<td>FC Wales looked into leasing Long Wood to the community group. This process took longer than anticipated and the group lost trust in the process. Treasury Rules also meant that the rent would have been at the market rate, creating an on-going revenue cost for the group. The Big Lottery Asset Transfer programme offered the opportunity for the group to buy the woodland outright at market value. The group purchased the woodland and this has allowed the group to undertake the income generating activities based on timber extraction that they wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golygfa Gwydyr (social enterprise)</td>
<td>Lease&lt;br&gt;The group wished to have a long term agreement that allowed them to manage the timber resources for social enterprise and the right to have fires in the woods.</td>
<td>The negotiation of the Lease was unsuccessful. The community woodland was a small part of a large high value multi-use area of forest. Access was another barrier to the community group gaining the right to have fires on site. The limited access meant that emergency services would not be able to get to the site. The group are currently re-negotiating their agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coetir Mynydd (charitable company)</td>
<td>Input into FCW Forest Design Plans&lt;br&gt;The group wanted greater input into management of an FCW through inputs into the FC Wales Forest Design Plan process.</td>
<td>Whilst the community group has been able to input into the FDP consultation process, there have been on-going issues – for example a lost application, and 3 changes of Local Area Managers in four years. Coetir Mynydd is writing a case study about their experience on the pathfinder programme but this is not yet available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: summary of the desired and actual outcomes for each of the 3 Pathfinder Projects

In exploring the implications of higher levels of community involvement in the management of the WGWE, a key barrier was that the Forestry Act (1967) prevented FCW from handing over a woodland via a Lease to a third party to manage.

The WG successfully challenged this provision of the Forestry Act. This meant that FCW/NRW could enter into agreements for others to manage portions of the estate but only in line with a prescriptive plan that FCW/NRW approved. In essence, the agreement holder would be working on behalf of FCW/NRW. The process of resolving this issue took approximately two years, and there appears to have been a degree of loss of trust between the Pathfinder community groups and FCW over this time. This may have been due to the length of time the processes took, staff changes and communication problems between the parties.
The other issues that arose and still remains is that the sale price of WGWE woodlands cannot be discounted for community groups and must be sold at market value as a high value public asset.

Ultimately, the work on Pathfinders would inform the development of WaY. Whilst some of the issues the Pathfinder Projects were set up to address still remain, the work enabled FCW to develop a criteria based framework (with ‘Public Involvement and Enterprise Framework ‘PIEF’ as its working title) to assess the ability of community groups to manage the WGWE as well as FCW could, and ideally deliver greater community benefits.

The PIEF had a wider remit than the initial Pathfinder Projects and provided for a spectrum of community involvement in the WGWE. PIEF included an application process modelled on a traditional grants application process. In 2011 this predecessor of WaY was proposed and debated in internal and external FCW-led workshops.

In June 2011, Phase 1 of WaY was launched on the FCW webpage. A WaY Guidance Leaflet was produced and circulated via Network Wales and the WCVA Network Wales magazine. A Ministerial launch was planned, but the Minister had to withdraw on the morning of the day and it was not possible to re-arrange the event. The WaY scheme was therefore never publicly launched or promoted by FCW.

In 2013, FCW came together with the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales to form Natural Resources Wales (NRW); a process of institutional reform which involved considerable upheaval, contraction and cost cutting. To this day, WaY has never been publicly launched or indeed publicised much beyond the FCW website presence. WaY continues as the NRW-wide framework for community involvement in the WGWE, and will be rolled out and re-branded to cover opportunities on all land managed by NRW.

3.2. The WaY Process

The first point of contact for an activity/event application or a project application on the WGWE is the local Forest District. Applicants are required to contact their local District as the first step to discuss proposals (to avoid any effort being wasted). The applicant then fills in an application form, available to download from the website accompanied by online Guidance Notes. An online Introduction to WaY, containing further guidance, answers to Frequently Asked Questions and case studies of successful projects on the WGWE can also be downloaded.

The applicant is assigned a ‘Lead Contact,’ usually the Local Area Manager or Community Ranger and a decision on the application should be given within 12 weeks. The Woodlands and You Process is set out in Figure 6, and also includes NRW’s internal guidance on the help and support that individuals and groups can be given throughout the WaY process.

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23 Woodlands and You. Using the Welsh Government’s woodlands for events, activities and projects. Guidance. FC Wales 2011
24 In 2013, following feedback from applicants and FCW staff, the WaY Application Forms and Guidance Notes were amended to make them shorter and more ‘tailored’.
Figure 6: NRW Internal guidance flowcharts for WaY processes.
The online ‘Introduction to WaY’ guidance (WG, 2011), states that, “FCW officers will actively support the development of your proposal as far as possible, for example with the provision of:

- Advice and guidance on the WaY process
- Assistance with woodland maps
- Woodland management best practice
- Woodlands for Wales advice
- Information about local woods and Forest Design Plans
- Explanation of basic risk assessment procedures
- Advice on felling and planting licences”

The Introduction to WaY (WG, 2011) notes that if the applicant needs guidance ‘on how to set up your group, where potential sources of funding might be, how to reach and involve all members of the community you will need to talk to other organisations’, contact details, including those for Llais y Goedwig, are provided.

**Description of a Management Agreement with NRW**

‘A Management Agreement is a fixed term contract setting out exactly what you are permitted to do – it does not give you exclusive use of the woodland or grant a legal interest in it.’

**Description of a Lease with NRW**

‘A Lease does give you exclusive possession of a defined area and would be suitable for eg community food projects or the construction of shelters or buildings. Woodlands are Leased at market value.’

Source: Introduction to WaY (WG, 2011)

### 3.3. Corporate Support for WaY implementation

As noted above, policy statements from the Welsh Government, most notably in the Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy (2009), have clearly stated the Government’s commitment to community involvement in woodlands in Wales (“More communities involved (sic) in the decision making and management of woodlands so that woodlands deliver greater benefits at a community level”). Indicators for the desired WfW outcomes of (1) Involvement in Woodlands and (2) Community Groups, are reported on annually by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government 2010 Policy Position identified a set of 6 ‘actions’ or ‘key building blocks that need to be in place to enable more and higher levels of beneficial community involvement in woodlands in Wales’. The actions are to be implemented through corporate planning processes. The full ‘set of 6 actions’ to be pursued in corporate planning processes are: (a) Accessible, well
managed woodlands (b) Effective mechanisms for community engagement (c) Effective support structures (d) Funding (e) Facilitating community involvement (f) Promotion (WG, 2010).  

Concerning (f) Promotion; the Policy Position states: “Many of the benefits which may be generated through community involvement in woodlands may not be obvious to community groups – in order to encourage more groups to take an interest in woodlands the benefits need to be communicated and promoted. We will encourage this promotion amongst public sector providers and also seek to work with the third sector and private sector to reach groups in urban and rural areas.” (WG, 2010)

Concerning (e) Facilitating community involvement, the Policy Position breaks this action down further into 3 aspects that need to be provided by the WG through corporate processes:

- **Legal framework:** a range of clear legal options need to be developed to enable community involvement at appropriate levels.
- **Clear guidance:** Appropriate guidance is required which supports woodland managers and communities to identify management objectives, assess risks and seek suitable management arrangements.
- **Skilled facilitators:** Skilled facilitators may be required to deliver higher levels of involvement. There needs to be adequate investment of time and skill in the process of engagement to build trust, analyse the key issues and negotiate suitable Agreements.

The question is, how are the corporate bodies charged with delivering on Welsh Government woodland policy carrying forward these political commitments?

The final FCW Corporate Plan (2012 - 2015) suggests that WaY was regarded as one of its key schemes for delivering the WfW commitment: “Through Woodlands and You, we encourage and support public involvement through community groups, social enterprises, and with individual volunteers and entrepreneurs. Committed individuals and a wide range of groups are influencing the management of woodlands and mobilising resources of their own, and this is delivering significantly more public benefit than we could alone.”

Two of the 2012-2015 FCW Corporate Plan Programmes included work streams related to WaY (Fig.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FCW Corporate Programme 4 - Public involvement &amp; enterprise (2012-15)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we did in 2011/12</td>
<td>What we will do in 2012/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published Woodlands and You (WaY) - a coordinated approach to public involvement for the WGWE and implemented across Wales.</td>
<td>Continue to develop and promote the WaY framework and introduce a more effective IT system for permissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using WaY and other contract routes promote and encourage local fire wood supply chains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using the WaY approach, develop an approach to community allotments making land available in South Wales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 The actions are an Agenda for Action (WG, 2010)
#### Figure 7: FCW Corporate Plan Programme with work streams that mention WaY (2012-15 Corporate Plan).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we did in 2011/12</th>
<th>What we will do in 2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14 Work</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands and You</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developed to promote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and encourage use of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the WGWE for a range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of recreation and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access activities and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However the first (current) NRW Corporate Plan (2014-17) and Business Plan (2014-15) do not appear to carry forward the WaY work streams from the last FCW Corporate Plan.

#### Figure 8: NRW Corporate Plan (2014-17) statements that relate to WaY.

The current NRW Corporate Plan includes a Good for People ‘commitment’ (P3) which aims to ensure people are able to live, work in, and visit a good quality environment, including those in urban areas and those in our most disadvantaged communities, and will channel economic benefit to help tackle poverty. A key indicator for this commitment is the number of volunteers directly hosted by NRW or facilitated through WaY (and successor approaches).

In support of the P3 commitment, the current NRW Business Plan (2014-15) states *inter alia, that a focus for NRW will be to ‘work with local communities to get more people involved in place-based decisions, and developing future plans together using a principle of community ownership and co-production, particularly close to land and water we manage.’*

The accompanying measurable targets\(^{26}\) in the current Business Plan for this P3 focus refer only to work on urban woodlands and make no mention of WaY or community management of the WGWE. Indicative targets for 2015-16 and beyond focus on the urban work programme.

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\(^{26}\) Targets for 2014-15 focus on the Wales Urban Canopy Cover study, an i-Tree Eco report, the Coed Aber urban tree project and subsequent work with Local Authorities to develop urban tree strategies. Targets for 2015 and 2016-17 focus on an urban work programme in Wales’ most deprived areas.
In summary, it is more difficult to discern in the NRW Corporate Plan, beyond the P3 focus on ‘community involvement in place based decisions and community ownership’ the clear mechanisms by which the WfW policy commitments on community involvement are being carried forward.

This is in part due to the way NRW works; the NRW Corporate Plan focuses on higher level actions across the 3 legacy organisations (EA, CCW and FCW). The detailed actions which were once visible in the FCW Corporate Plan are now set out in ‘inward facing Directorate Delivery Plans’.

The policy landscape in Wales is changing; there are new initiatives that will gradually impact on community woodlands, including: the ecosystems approach, Cynefin programme, ‘area based and collaborative’ Natural Resource planning, co-production, community food growing & allotments and

NRW Corporate Plan 2014 -2017

The policy landscape in Wales is changing; there are new initiatives that will gradually impact on community woodlands, including: the ecosystems approach, Cynefin programme, ‘area based and collaborative’ Natural Resource planning, co-production, community food growing & allotments and

No explicit mention is made of the 6 actions in the 2010 Position Paper on Community Involvement with Welsh Woodlands, for instance ‘key building blocks’ such as ‘Accessible well managed woodlands, Effective mechanisms for community engagement, Funding, Facilitating community involvement and Promotion.’

27 Cynefin brings together local people, groups, businesses and organisations that deliver services to improve where they live or work. The programme is supported by the Welsh Government. The word ‘Cynefin’, translates best as ‘habitat’ but also means a place that you belong to. Cynefin ‘Place Coordinators’ are working in 9 communities across Wales.

http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epg/cleanneighbour/cynefin/?lang=en
urban forestry. Over the next few years WaY will be rolled out to cover all land managed by NRW – the scheme currently has the working title of Mynediad.

4. Methodology

Four distinct methods of data collection were used to inform this study: (1) Data on WaY collected by NRW, (2) Interviews with NRW staff involved in WaY, (3) Interviews with community groups involved in WaY and (4) Additional discussions with stakeholders.

4.1. Data on WaY collected by NRW since 2011

Baseline data on WaY enquiries, applications, permits/permissions (for activities and events) and Management Agreements/Leases issued from 2011 onwards was provided by NRW. Responsibility for overall management of the scheme and for compiling data on WaY Enquiries, Applications, Permissions, Management Agreements and Leases currently lies with the four NRW Forest Districts (see Fig. 9).

Data on ‘permissions’

NRW analysed its data on WaY ‘permissions’ for the financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13 and presented its findings in a PowerPoint presentation (Anglezarke, 2013), this was made available to Llais y Goedwig in November 2013. The source data from the PowerPoint was made available for use in this study in February 2014. This included data on ‘permissions’ but not Management Agreements or Leases.

Figure 9: NRW Forest Districts in Wales

The WaY 2013-14 data spread sheets were made available in July 2014, and incorporated into the analysis. This included data on ‘permissions’ but not Management Agreements or Leases.

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28 Email communication from Barbara Anglezarke July 8th 2014
29 The data was collected from the districts and provided to Llais y Goedwig by Barbara Anglezarke, NRW Senior Woodlands for People Manager.
30 Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 21/02/14
31 The map contains logos and references from before the merger of FCW with two other environmental bodies to make Natural Resources Wales
In August 2014, NRW completed a basic analysis of permissions\textsuperscript{32} for the financial years 2013-14 and made this available to Llais y Goedwig. This data was combined with the data from 2011-12 data and is presented in section 5.1.(a) of this report.

Data on Management Agreements and Leases

In January 2014, information on Management Agreements and leases was made available from two districts: a detailed spreadsheet from Llandovery District and a simple list of projects with no detail from Coed y Mynydd District\textsuperscript{33}.

In March 2014, information on Management Agreements and Leases was provided for Coed y Cymoedd\textsuperscript{34}.

No data was received on Management Agreements and Leases from Coed y Gororau District.

The details provided on these Agreements were inconsistent and contained discrepancies; often the type of agreement was not clear, nor was it always clear if the agreement began after the launch of WaY or was already in place in 2011. Clarifications were asked for but were not available from NRW at the time.

In August 2014, it became apparent that it was not possible for NRW to provide definitive numbers of Management Agreement and Leases\textsuperscript{35} that have been issued since 2011 through the WaY scheme.

4.2. Interviews with NRW staff involved in WaY

In November 2013, Llais y Goedwig contacted all the Local Area Managers (LAMs) and Community Rangers (CRs) to request an interview. 10 of the 14 LAMs and all 3 CRs were interviewed by phone using a Semi Structured Interview, in the winter of 2013 or spring of 2014.

One Forest District Manager (FDM), one Administrator and one Land Agent were also interviewed. Follow-up interviews to clarify points arising were held with Barbara Anglezarke, Aaron Fortt and Richard Davies.\textsuperscript{36}

4.3. Interviews with community groups ‘involved’ in WaY\textsuperscript{37}

In order to find community groups involved in long-term projects on the WGWE, Llais y Goedwig asked NRW for information on (i) Management Agreements/Leases issued to community groups under WaY, (ii) community projects that had been turned down, (iii) community groups that had enquired about a WaY project but hadn’t submitted an application. The data on enquiries,

\textsuperscript{32} Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 06/08/14

\textsuperscript{33} Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 17/01/14

\textsuperscript{34} Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 12/03/14

\textsuperscript{35} Email communication, Barbara Anglezarke 06/08/14

\textsuperscript{36} Barbara Anglezarke and Richard Davies, NRW and Aaron Fortt, Forestry Policy Team, Department for Natural Resources, Culture and Sport, Welsh Government

\textsuperscript{37} By this is meant community groups already running longer-term projects on the Woodland Estate or in the process of negotiating an agreement with NRW. Note that in many cases the groups negotiated permissions or Agreements with NRW before the WaY framework was created.
applications and Agreements is held in the Districts. Unfortunately, information on community projects was not available within the interview timeframe (November 2013 to February 2014).

In late 2013, Llais y Goedwig identified 20 community groups operating on the Estate from other sources. Between November 2013 and February 2014, the 20 groups were contacted for interview.

A final total of 13 were interviewed by telephone,38 3 groups were contacted but did not participate and 5 groups were not contactable (refer to Appendix 6: Community groups involved in the WGWE interviewed for the study).

The aim of the interviews was to understand, from the perspective of community groups, how the WaY process has worked for them, in particular its strengths and weaknesses. Responses to interviews were paraphrased and read back to the interviewees, who then had the option of reviewing the transcript on request. The names of the group and the interviewees have been removed from this report in the interest of anonymity.

At a later date, Llais y Goedwig received datasheets from NRW which contained the names of community groups with projects on the Estate; these included many groups which Llais y Goedwig had not known about at the time of the interviews (refer to Appendix 7: NRW District Data on WaY management agreements and leases).

4.4. Additional discussions with stakeholders

In addition to the interviews listed the researchers also had meetings and phone interviews with:

- Andrew Michie (Arcadia Woods, Monmouthshire)
- Gareth Ellis (Green Valleys Community Interest Company, Powys)
- Fay Sharples (Pobl y Fforest Community woodland group, Carmarthenshire)
- David Williams (Blaen Bran Community Woodland, Torfaen)
- Adam Thorogood (Coetiroedd Dyfi Woodlands, Powys)
- Jenny Wong (Coetir Mynydd Woodland, Gwynedd)
- Jon Hollingdale, Chief Executive, Community Woodland Association, Scotland
- Anna Lawrence, Head of Social and Economic Research, Forest Research

4.5. Constraints

While every effort has been made to faithfully transcribe and represent the views of those interviewed, and interviewees have been given the opportunity to check and amend the transcripts, there may be omissions or errors in the text.

Whilst the interviews have been anonymised, some community groups felt that the information they provided would make them identifiable: this could have impacted on the groups’ willingness to talk about sensitive issues.

38 Of these, 1 was found through the ‘Emerging groups’ research done previously by LlyG and 2 from ‘word of mouth’ from other groups and the remaining 8 groups were existing members of Llais y Goedwig.
There were significant issues with the NRW District data (Section 4.1). Consistent records on Management Agreements and Leases are not kept across NRW by the Districts. The data recorded in the Districts on Agreements is inconsistent and contains discrepancies; often the type of agreement is not specified and it is not clear whether the agreement pre-dates WaY or not. No specific data is recorded on whether the agreement is with a community group. It was therefore not possible to come to a reliable estimate of the number of Management Agreements and Leases agreed by NRW for community groups since 2011.

Further doubt is cast on the completeness of NRW data, as during the course of this research, the authors became aware of a number of projects that should have been included in the lists provided, (i.e. a community group who had an agreement / permission through WaY) but do not appear to have been recorded by NRW.

As noted, the NRW District data was not available to Llais y Goedwig prior to the interviews; this had two consequences:

1. It was not possible to ‘check’ or enquire about a specific list of local Management Agreements and Leases with NRW district staff.
2. Some community groups with projects on the Estate were not interviewed.

5. Results

5.1. WaY Data (collected by NRW) Analysis Results

(a) Permissions granted under WaY since 2011

Permissions refer to permits for one-off or multiple events, activities and surveys; permissions do not cover longer-term projects on the WGWE that require longer term Management Agreements and Leases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permission (P) Numbers</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat (P) Applications</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers taking part in (P)</td>
<td>3,686</td>
<td>30,014</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>4,286</td>
<td>11091</td>
<td>3200</td>
<td>1,704</td>
<td>20,380</td>
<td>40,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers taking part in (P)</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>3087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biggest event (nos. taking part in (P))</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Fees Total (£)</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>5953</td>
<td>200,649</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
<td>N/R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Summary of NRWs’ data on the number of ‘permissions’, since the launch of WaY in 2011, based on the data received from NRW. N/R = not recorded.
It can be seen from Table 1 that the total recorded number of WaY ‘permissions’ issued increased from 746 in the first year of WaY (2011-12) to 940 in the second year, followed by a slight decrease in the third year (2013-14) down to 912, possibly due to a decline in repeat applications (see fig. 9).

Fig. 9 shows that while the recorded number of new ‘permissions’ issued has increased each year since 2011, repeat applications are decreasing; 2013-14 saw a sharp decrease of 59% in repeat applications (the reason for this drop is unknown but can be at least partially accounted for by the lack of recorded data on repeat applications from Coed y Cymoedd for 2013-14).

The total number of people taking part in WaY events on the Estate appears to have increased by 82% one year after the launch of WaY in 2011 (see Table 1 and Fig. 11). It is not known if this is due to an actual increase or if, at least partially, it is an indication of increased data recording. The following year, 2013-14, shows a decrease of 40% in people taking part in WaY events and activities, however, the figures are skewed by a lack of data from Coed y Cymoedd and Coed y Mynydd.
What types of activities and events are being approved under WaY ‘permissions’? Fig. 12 shows that the most numerous ‘permissions’ issued under WaY are for fox control (14%) and Ministry of Defence activities (9%), followed by mountain biking, horse riding, walking/running at 6%.

Figure 12: Types of activities and events approved under WaY permissions⁹⁹ - from NRW data.

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⁹⁹ N=2055 permissions, 77% of the total of 2679 total permissions over 3 years, the remaining 23% of permission types that occur less often are not represented in this graphic.
Management Agreements and Leases granted under WaY from NRW compiled data

For the reasons explained in the Methodology, it is not possible to give a reliable and accurate estimate of the total number of Management Agreements and Leases granted since the start of the WaY scheme in 2011. The figures presented in this section should therefore be viewed as estimates to complement the NRW staff interviews (section 5.2) and the community group interviews (section 5.3) in order to build up a picture of community uptake of WaY.

The records of management agreements and leases provided for this report is presented in full in Appendix 7: NRW District Data on WaY management agreements and leases. No data was available from Coed y Gororau.

Number of management agreements and leases issued since 2011

A total of 42 management agreements and leases were recorded by the Forest Districts, 7 in Coed y Mynydd, 23 in Llanymddyfri and 12 in Coed y Cymoedd. However, 17 of these were approved before the start of WaY\(^40\). Of the remaining 26, 3 have not yet been approved and there is a query beside 5 of the projects if they are or should be ‘permissions / permits’ rather than management agreements or leases. This leaves an estimate of between 18 and 23 new management agreements and leases approved and recorded since the launch of WaY in 2011\(^41\).

Table 2: Estimated number of Agreements & Leases recorded by NRW since 2011 (N/D= no data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest District</th>
<th>Total Management Agreements &amp; Leases Listed</th>
<th>Start date after 2011?</th>
<th>Not yet Approved</th>
<th>Query if they should be permission / permit</th>
<th>Low estimate of Management Agreements and Leases since 2011</th>
<th>High estimate of Management Agreements and Leases since 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llanymddyfri</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coed y Gororau</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(40\) Based on ‘start date’ of the project or, if date not provided, from interviews with Barbara Anglezarke and Jonathan Price.

\(41\) This is very likely to be an underestimate as no recorded data is available from Coed y Gororau and, during the course of research for this report, unrecorded agreements were discovered from the other districts.
Estimate of the number of MAs and Leases issued to community based groups and organisations since 2011

An estimated 23 new management agreements and leases were recorded by the Forest Districts since 2011 (see previous section), of these, the available information suggests that 52% (12) were agreements with community-based groups. There were an additional 3 with agreements in negotiation not yet approved.

Table 3: Management Agreements and Leases with community based groups and organisations approved since 2011, recorded by the Forest Districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Agreement Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interviewed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Llanymddyfri Arts Alive &quot; access to the outdoors&quot;</td>
<td>Arts Alive</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Llanymddyfri Pontrhydfendigaid Community Woodland Assn</td>
<td>Pontrhydfendigaid Community woodland Assn</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Llanymddyfri Talley Community Woodland</td>
<td>Talley Community Woodland</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Millwood Project</td>
<td>Down to Earth</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Beast of Bryn Route</td>
<td>Bryn Residents Action Group</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Drysiog Walks Project</td>
<td>Bryn Residents Action Group</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Gower Woodland Management Project</td>
<td>Green Woodland Crafts</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Heritage Walking Trails</td>
<td>Pembrey Conservation Trust</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Charcoal kiln and bushcraft</td>
<td>Dryad Bushcraft</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd Heritage Walking Trails</td>
<td>Glyncorrwg Ponds &amp; MTB Centre</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Coed y Mynydd Toilet block and car park management</td>
<td>Abergwyngregyn Partnership</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Coed y Mynydd Cabins</td>
<td>Outward Bound</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organisations / groups that the authors have not counted as ‘community-based groups’ include private enterprises, Police, Wildlife Trusts, etc. Note that there were some organizations and groups where this distinction was not clear-cut, as such this can only be a ‘best guess’ estimate.

It is not clear from the details provided which are management agreements or leases. It is assumed that most are management agreements.

The full list of interviewed groups is in appendix 6 and results of the community group interviews are in section 5.3. Note that the reason there is a discrepancy between the two lists is that the NRW district data was not available at the time of interviews.
Table 4: Estimate of the number of MAs and Leases with *community based groups and organisations* currently in negotiation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Agreement Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interviewed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Coed y Cymoedd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tir Coed Village Trust</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td>Ceinws Play area</td>
<td>Dyfi Valley Play Initiative</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wisewoods Wales</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the 12 agreements identified in the previous section, 1 new lease that was not recorded by Coed y Cymoedd Forest District and 3 management agreements in negotiation not recorded by Coed y Cymoedd, Coed y Mynydd and Coed y Gororau Forest Districts.\(^45\)

This brings the ‘best guess’ estimate of community uptake of WaY to **13 management agreements and leases approved since the outset of WaY** and 6 management agreements currently in negotiation.

### 5.2. NRW Staff Interview Results

Llais y Goedwig was keen to hear the views of NRW district staff on how WaY is operating, on the level of community uptake of WaY (e.g. high, low) and on the reasons for the degree of uptake.

\(^45\) Listed in appendix 6
(a) NRW staffing\(^{46}\) in the 4 Forest Districts

The composition of NRW staff working on the WGWE varies across the 4 Forest Districts\(^{47}\), reflecting the different demands placed on NRW in the four areas. Coed y Cymoedd District is unique in having a complement of Community Rangers in addition to Local Area Managers.

Table 5: NRW staffing in the 4 Forest Districts – Autumn 2013 (supplied by NRW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing in Coed y Cymoedd District – Resolven</th>
<th>Staffing in Coed y Mynydd District – Dolgellau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Area Managers</td>
<td>Local Area Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebbw</td>
<td>Coed y Brenin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardal Y Giannau</td>
<td>Ceredigion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llanwynno</td>
<td>Eryri, Anglesey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Rangers</td>
<td>Dyfi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebbw</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardal Y Giannau</td>
<td>Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llanwynno</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District office</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Forest District Manager</td>
<td>Forest District Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District office</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing in Gororau District – Welshpool</th>
<th>Staffing in Llanymddyfri district - Llandovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Area Managers</td>
<td>Local Area Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hafren, Dyfnant</td>
<td>Brecon Beacons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radnor, Ceri</td>
<td>Crychan, Irfon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clocaenog, Moel Famau</td>
<td>Pembs, Carms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>Gwent, Wye Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District office</td>
<td>n/a(^{50})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Agent</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest District Manager</td>
<td>Forest District Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District office</td>
<td>District office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) NRW Staff views on the purpose of WaY\(^{51}\) (District level)

When asked to explain the purpose of WaY, the Forest District staff consistently explained that WaY is a ‘tool’ or an ‘opportunity’ to enable people to make greater use of the WGWE.

\(^{46}\) Information on staffing levels and contact details as provided by Barbara Anglezarke, NRW in November 2013, and may not reflect the current situation.

\(^{47}\) At the time of this study the agencies that merged to form NRW (Forestry Commission Wales, the Environment Agency and the Countryside Commission) were still maintaining their original staffing and organizational structures within NRW.

\(^{48}\) Office Manager

\(^{49}\) Works for Area Land Agent

\(^{50}\) This post was ‘empty’ at time of interviewing

\(^{51}\) This question refers to the entire WaY scheme: i.e both events and projects
NRW Forest District staff views on the purpose of WaY (events and projects)\textsuperscript{52}

‘It is a way of allowing community groups or individuals to carry out the activities that they might have always wanted to do on NRW land.’

‘It’s a way for people to gain access to the woodland for an event or project – and to agree a safe route – it’s rare that we turn anything down.’

‘It’s the way the WG allows members of communities/groups to undertake activities on the WG estate and to engage people – to do what they want to do in a safe and sustainable way.’

‘It’s basically to encourage more use of the NRW estate where appropriate.’

‘It’s a way of being able to use our forests in a formal way – it has to be done in a formal way for the health and safety of all forest users – it is a safe and formal way of using our facilities.’

‘We can provide land for people to do activities – they just need to talk to us first.’

‘It is their tool to communicate with us about what they want to do in the forest – and it is our own tool to enable it to happen.’

‘It is giving people the opportunity for enjoying the forests and making good use of them – through whatever event or activity they want to do.’

‘It’s about people working to maximise the land.’

‘One of the tools we use as a land manager to make the most use of the forest.’

‘Increasingly it’s being used just as a permissions system – this was not what it meant to be.’

\textbf{(c) NRW Staff roles and responsibilities (District level)}

The Local Area Managers (LAMs) explained that their role\textsuperscript{53} was “day to day management of the forest estate.” It is a wide ranging role that encompasses legal liabilities on the estate, boundary work, fencing, tree safety, permissions, roads, complaints, buildings, interpretation, recreation (e.g. planning cycling routes), working with communities and conservation.

The LAMs are “responsible for everything on the estate except harvesting and re-stocking.” “The big priorities are the health & safety aspects & drainage, water, recreation, anti-social use, access, permissions through WaY, it’s a broad spectrum.”

\textsuperscript{52} Q.4 LAMs and CRs - If you were explaining WaY (the purpose) to local people in a nutshell, what would you say?

\textsuperscript{53} LlyG has not seen the LAMs job description. Terry O’Keefe, WG Forest Policy unit noted that when the LAM post was created many FCW Beat foresters moved into the LAM posts (per comm O’Keefe, 2nd Sept 2014)
The work of Community Rangers (CR)\textsuperscript{54} was reported as “recreation’ (inspections and design of facilities), the ‘community side’ (WaY), consultations and communications on forestry operations.”

(d) **Proportion\textsuperscript{55} of District staff time spent on WaY (events and projects)**

The Local Area Managers explained that they are the ‘interface’ with WaY permissions and projects. They noted that the proportion of their time spent on WaY varied depending on the nature of the applications\textsuperscript{56}, for instance 1 LAM noted that “the work is reactive and can be skewed by one big application” while another reported that “It only takes time if it is a project”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRW Forest District staff proportion of time spent on WaY (events and projects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Maybe 5 or 6 enquiries a month – some of these are major ones e.g. from power companies that will not go through WaY. Maybe it works out at 1 day a month. The estimate can be skewed by 1 big application – e.g. recent one from a motor bike company – I worked on it 3 months full time.’ LAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Probably including the activities and permissions it is 10% of my time.’ LAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The community aspect – the bigger management Leases and so on is not the bulk of it. We use WaY to manage requests – fox hunting, huskies etc. It’s probably 4-10 hours a week of my time. Some of the requests are a nightmare – they take a lot of time e.g. someone wanting to change a hunting date… that can involve negotiations with different teams working in the forest…’ LAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is one of the biggest bits of my time – attending a lot of meetings for it in communities.’ LAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It’s hard to say – I help with a lot of reactive work in a team – it varies – in comparison to others in the team it is significant.’ CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Previously when the event applications were not electronic it was about 60% of my time, now that it is electronic the events side has dropped off dramatically – but the LAMs workload has gone up as they have to sign the events off – but WaY is still about 50% of my time because the projects take time – the events is less than 10% of my time and the rest is projects.’ CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Very little – the permissions go to the Administrator and we say yes most of the time – so it’s not much unless you get a lot of project stuff and we have only had one.’ LAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is about 10% of my time – but it can depend on the nature of the application and what else is happening.’ LAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{54} One LAM noted that the job of the ‘recreation rangers’ & the ‘recreation and community rangers’ is the same.
\textsuperscript{55} The District Administrators also have responsibilities for WaY. One reported that it took 5% of her time (events and projects).
\textsuperscript{56} The reason given for spending ‘very little’ time was that permissions go to the administrator
One LAM said that in his area “we use WaY to manage requests (permissions) – for fox hunting, huskies. It’s probably 4-10 hours a week of my time….it can be time consuming.” The Forest District Manager interviewed also estimated that he spent 5% of his time on WaY (events and projects).

The Community Rangers spend the greatest proportion of their time on WaY (in Wales there are only 3, all in CyC district). One CR explained that: “WaY is still\(^{57}\) about 50% of my time because the projects take time – now the events is less than 10% of my time and the rest is projects” and another CR reported that “it varies but in comparison to others in the team it is significant.”

It was explained “that the work of the CRs is organized around a broad forward job plan that will lay out 5 or 6 key areas of work for their time. When community rangers started two years ago, about 80% of their time was spent on consultations with communities – over time their roles became more generic – things like recreation inspections came into the forward job plans – they no longer reflect the original intention of community rangers. The 3 community rangers are now generic rangers but they don’t have a standardized work plan – there is no one telling them to spend x% of their time on WaY etc – so the LAM dictates the time.”

(e) District staff roles in relation to WaY (events and projects)

The Local Area Managers all regard WaY as one of their regular responsibilities in a wide ranging role. One LAM noted that “I get quite a lot of requests for permissions and events through WaY: – enabling people to use the estate is a central part of my role.”

In districts without Community Rangers, the LAMs reported that their role is to “facilitate WaY when the requests come in; directing people to the WaY application forms on the internet, and they fill them in and then we see if it’s a goer – with the project requests it’s a discussion with LAMs first before the form is filled in”. In some instances the LAM helps people fill in the forms (for instance planning recreation routes through the forest) before they are passed to the district Administrators.

One LAM explained that, “it is really about untangling what people want. If they want to do something they have to do the forms – whichever way they look at it – I say nothing is ruled out –we will agree to practically anything – there is not much that we will turn down.’

Working with colleagues to organize tree felling operations in a certain way to enable wider use of the forest is a common example of how LAMs work to support WaY. “All the permissions come through us and we comment on them and agree or disagree – what we don’t have time to do is encourage a person who comes and says I want to do this – we will steer them through the

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\(^{57}\) The CR reported that when the event applications were not electronic it was about 60% of his time – now that it is electronic not sure what that means? the events side has dropped off but the LAMs’ workload has gone up as they have to sign off on events.
application – but a lot is down to resources and the time we have – as a team we are happy to get people involved in the forest but we run out of time – so many demands on us.”

In areas with Community Rangers the LAMs report that: “it’s more of a side line – I get a lot of enquiries about using the forest estate – I give a steer\(^{58}\) as to whether or not people should put an application into WaY & then pass it onto the CR. The Community Rangers do the day to day liaison with the applications and give them help with the forms.” In this district the LAMs take on a “gatekeeper and managing expectations role\(^^{59}\)” in relation to WaY.

One Community Ranger explained that “my role now is more advisory – whereas before it was about getting heavily involved – helping people plant trees etc – if they have an idea I can guide them through with the form and advice..” A second CR reported that their role is to “answer any queries and to encourage groups or individuals to do something and to take them through the WaY process – and to hold their hands and progress the application.”

A more proactive view was given by a third Community Ranger: “I try to spend as much time with a group as possible before they put in an application – it is hand holding… talking about what their aims are etc.. what they have been doing and then assisting them – I spend a lot of time with them - making sure the application is as good as it can be. It is very front end loaded for me – once the application has gone in I have minimal input into the process - your role as a CR is to work with the community to do things on NRW land -being proactive….. I think WaY is fantastic.”

One of the CRs noted that “in many districts there is so much else going on. LAMs are busy in a lot of areas – here we have a team (including CRs) – in other areas there is not a team like this and the LAM does everything so WaY is a low priority for them - especially if there are few applications coming in.”

(g) How do people find out about WaY? (permissions and projects)

In Gororau Forest District, the FDM explained that “probably 90% of our people using WaY are repeats\(^^{60}\) – they know who to talk to and they know about WaY because they were involved with the previous permissions system.”

Overwhelmingly, it was reported that the most common approach is a phone call to the District Office from someone wanting to do something and asking for advice on how to do it. The staff will brief the caller on WaY and point them to the forms on the website (or print the forms off for them).

One LAM noted that “we have a good relationship with people in the area – often people just phone up and ask us.” Another LAM noted that sometimes “people do something without permission and we catch them – and we then suggest WaY – about 50% of those will go on and do it through WaY.”

\(^{58}\) We did not ask what criteria were used in determining the ‘steer’

\(^{59}\) This comment may indicate that there is a real need for better information about where to refer people onto for advice and support

\(^{60}\) A LAM in the same district confirmed that “a lot of what we do is repeat permissions.”
Some of the District staff noted that “WaY is not really advertised” and that “finding the form on the internet can be difficult.” One LAM noted that “some people misunderstand and think WaY is a consultation process – that we are asking them what they want …it may be that we are not a very penetrable organization from the outside – we don’t advertise things …and if you do you raise expectations that you can’t deliver.”

One LAM noted that “the public don’t seem to know what we can actually offer – they seem a bit surprised when they see what is possible.” One staff member said that “it’s not easy for the public to understand the idea of projects. It is really hard to find it on the website – you would not know it was called WaY. How could the public access it on the internet if they don’t know about WaY?”

Sometimes personal contacts and proximity are key; one LAM explained that, “we have entered into a community Management Agreement with a school to manage the woods – we knew there was a need in the national curriculum and helped them along – it is right opposite our office.”

The Community Rangers also inform people about WaY at local meetings, for instance with Residents Associations. Another CR noted that “we have got no promotional material – only the forms off the internet – no leaflets – I have been printing off the old permissions to show them examples of what people have written.” A third CR noted that “usually it comes through the recreational contact – any recreational facility in our area will have us down as a contact.”

(h) Numbers of enquiries and applications for WaY Projects

Llais y Goedwig was unable to obtain data on the total numbers of WaY project enquiries since 2011. It is not known if the information on the number and nature of enquiries to NRW concerning potential WaY projects is kept at the District level in some form.

Llais y Goedwig asked the LAMs and CRs to estimate the number of WaY project enquiries received since 2011 and the proportion that had gone on to become WaY project applications. As can be seen from the answers below, the level of enquiries received varies across Wales but is fairly modest.

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Numbers of enquiries and applications for WaY projects (NRW Forest District Staff)

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61 There are some case studies on the old FC Wales website and there is a leaflet (FC Wales Wales Guidance – Woodlands and You. Using the Welsh Government’s woodlands for events, activities and projects. WG 2011)

62 Llais y Goedwig contacted only 1 of the 4 District Administrators. The staff member contacted was not able to readily provide the data requested.
“No major WaY projects. Enquiries from mountain bike events – ongoing with 2 or 3 and horse riding.’
Eryn, Anglesey. COED y Mynydd

“3 projects - WiseWoods have a Management Agreement to manage a woodland, Dyfi woodlands have been working with us for a year on permissions & are wanting to develop a Management Agreement, Penparcau Scout Group is up and running – it started off as a Management Agreement but they are going for a Lease now. It’s a trickle of enquiries.’ Ceredigion, COED y Mynydd

“We have had 4 enquiries in the last year – one was for an allotment area, 2 for Forest Schools and 1 for a wild play area. 3 of the above have filled in the application but not the allotment group.’ Dyfi. COED y Mynydd

‘No enquiries in the last year – not of their own initiative – but a few months ago we entered into a community Management Agreement with a school.’ Crychan, Irfon. LLANYMDDYFRI

‘5 or 6 project enquiries last year… a lot from people wanting to build bike trails for a livelihood – not community groups – often you send the form & you don’t hear back.’ Pembrokeshire, LLANYMDDYFRI

‘I don’t think we have had any enquiries about projects – the only one is about bushcraft and it is really a repeat event.’ Brecon, LLANYMDDFRI

‘The only 1 (project enquiry) is the Knighton allotments example – this got to the stage of the application being filled in – eventually we had to turn it down last year.’ Radnor, Ceri GORORAU

‘Community based applications are not coming through – not for the longer term projects. Only 1 community Management Agreement - for a mountain biking club- an annual agreement not through WaY. One other application in last 2 years from an autism based charity – potentially a great project – on hold temporarily due to windfarm development.’ Clocaenog, Moel Famau/GORORAU

‘2 enquiries – one for horse riding club and one for a motorbike company. Both of the 2 enquiries are in the process of becoming applications.’ Hafren, Dyfnant GORORAU

‘5-6 WaY enquiries for events and projects – some of the events have gone on to be applications eg community food Agreements and allotments.” Llanwynno. COED y CYMOEDD (CR)

‘Maybe ½ a dozen in the past year eg Mahatma Gandhi centre wanted to build a meditation centre. Only 1 enquiry went to full application & that we turned down.’ Llanwynno. COED y CYMOEDD (LAM)

‘total 12 in a year - 5 or 6 enquiry stage and further 5 applications in development (some enquiries not gone anywhere due to Local Authority cuts) - (a) an individual to run courses on coppice/green working & yurts (b) a community group for a woodland walk (c) a WT for charcoal burning & bushcraft (d) heritage walks and interpretation (e) Conservation Trust wanting to do on site management and to manage a building. It is a diverse group of applications.’ Ardal Y Glannau, COED y CYMOEDD CR

‘We have about 30-40 enquiries about projects in a year – eg for green wood-working, bird surveys etc – they come to me and then they go into the permissions system.’ Ebbw, COED y CYMOEDD CR

(i) How does the WaY process work in the Districts?³³ (WaY projects)

³³ This section refers primarily to WaY projects but also to permissions for events
The steps in processing a WaY project application are set out in Fig. 6. Llais y Goedwig was keen to understand how the process is working in the 4 NRW Forest Districts.

Enquiries concerning a potential WaY project generally come through a phone call to the district office, people are then guided to the WaY forms via the NRW website. As noted above, the LAMs and CRs provide guidance around the initial enquiry and advice on filling in the application form, which is then passed on to the district Administrator for processing.

Successful project applications result in Management Agreements or leases, for instance in Crychan Irfon area a Management Agreement has been signed with a local school: “it is an area of woodland that is useful for kids’ activities – the agreement is an open door to enable them to feel ownership and to do things e.g. build shelters – it is written quite loosely but it formalizes the relationship – if it was mountain bikes then we would want to know beforehand exactly what you want to do – then it has to be robust – but something low impact like a school project can be light touch.” (LAM). For ambitious projects, LAMs can spend a lot of time looking at the feasibility of the initial idea.

A Management Agreement often evolves from an earlier permission or MoU, for instance, an agreement signed with Pontrhydfendigaid CWG; “the process began about 5-6 years ago – it started with low key talks – and a statement of intent/MoU – they concluded a Management Agreement about 12 months ago –so they have the paperwork to underpin it now – it’s a group with strong environmental beliefs –wanted somewhere to do something practical.” (LAM)

In other instances, the process seems focused primarily on completing the application form: “.. they fill in the project form as much as possible and then I help them fill in the form” (LAM)

A CR who takes a proactive view of WaY described how he supports the process: “ someone gets in touch with an idea for a project e.g. local community action group wanted to put in a historic trail – I did some background work e.g. looking at FCW Design Plans to see if there would be any NRW objections – then met again to go over their template for risk, went through their activities and helped get them together, went over PLI65 issues then signposted them to fill in the application form– I also spoke to the conservation manager and smoothed out a lot of issues – I was a bit of a broker. I want to see the groups succeed”

When asked if they worked with other organisations on WaY, or guided applicants to other organisations for help, most district staff replied in the negative. One CR said “I don’t know of any organisation66 that could help (with applications) Groundworks have gone bankrupt and BTCV did in the past.’ The only organisations that were mentioned were Coed Lleol, Llais y Goedwig and the Federation of City Farms and Gardens.

Once completed, the applications ‘go into the permissions system’ – “the CRs don’t have access to the system so I don’t know what the result is until it comes out – people ask me what the progress is but I can’t answer as we are excluded from the system – the administrator is very good but busy.”

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64 http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8YRDR7
65 Public Liability Insurance
66 Some organisations are listed on the WaY webpage
67 City Farms helped a CR with finding insurance for a community allotments project
(j) **WaY project applications that are turned down**

It is difficult to assess the proportion of enquiries that do NOT proceed into project applications. District staff explained that enquiries may not develop into applications for a number of reasons: unsuitable sites (e.g. for motorbikes), applicants may be put off by the bureaucracy (form filling and insurance). It was also reported that “some people misunderstand and think WaY is a consultation process.” In general NRW Forest District staff said they try to accommodate project ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRW Forest District staff views on turning down WaY project applications from communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘No – never turned anything down.’ Dyfi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘No haven’t turned anything down.’ Ceredigion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Yes – autism charity application on hold due to windfarm development application.’ Clocaeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘No – nothing turned down.’ Dfynant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Yes - Knighton allotment group turned down by land agent due to lack of ‘additionality.’’ Radnor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘No – we always try to accommodate people’ Pembrokeshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘None have been turned down. One local guy wanted to put up a trail but when I spoke to him about insurance etc then it came to a halt – he did not realize what it entailed – even in a case like that I will try as hard as I can to convince people in the office that it is a good idea – the vast majority of enquiries that come in are a reasonable idea – sometimes people do look at the process and think it’s daunting – but that filters out the rubbish.’ Ardal Y Glannau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(k) **Numbers of WaY Agreements granted to communities**

Llais y Goedwig was keen to understand from the Forest District staff how many Management Agreements and Leases have been signed with community groups since 2011 in their local area. Data on the number of Agreements and Leases granted by NRW for projects on the WGWE is kept at the Forest District level. The data available from NRW does not appear to have a way of clearly recording the type of organisation or group that is applying, or if it is community based.

The picture that emerged from talking to Forest District staff suggests that around 10 - 12 new Agreements have been signed with community groups since the launch of WaY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRW Forest District staff views on numbers of WaY Agreements with communities in their area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘1 Management Agreement through WaY for a community allotment to grow food and engage with communities in Llanwynno.’ 8 or 9 Management Agreements pre-dating WaY. None of the pre-WaY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agreements are with community groups (e.g. Groundworks for inspecting paths and bridle routes, a hotel for walking routes, Rhondda CT for cycle routes and Ramblers for short walks).’ Llanwynno

‘2 Management Agreements - 1 for a community based wild play area and 1 for Forest Schools.’ Dyfi

‘Bigger Leases through land agents eg Golfa gwydyr’. Anglesey

‘2 Management Agreement s - 1 with Penparcau Scout Group -this group is now going for a Lease. Also 1 agreement with Wise Woods to manage Ty Llwyd wood as part of Tir Coed (previously Wise Woods had a series of permissions for making woodland products. Also Dyfi woodlands has been working with NRW for a year on permissions – they want to expand their work and do more actual management of the wood’. Ceredigion

‘2 Management Agreements - 1 with a school to manage the nearby woods for kids activities for the National Curriculum. Also 1 with Pontrhydfendigaid Community Woodland group’. Crychan, Irfon

‘1 Management Agreement which pre-dates WaY for a community woodland near Mythyr - a Cyd Coed legacy project’. Brecon

‘1 partnership agreement with Denbighshire CC for shared ownership of a car park, many sporting Leases, grazing Leases, Agreements with WTs, windfarm development etc – none through WaY.’ ‘Ex partnership agreement – Rainbow Trails at Dyfnant – example of untangling what people want – at the start it was a very vibrant community- now it’s just a couple of people – it was an agreement, in reality for what they wanted a licence was more appropriate – and that is what we have now. They decided where they wanted the trails to go and we put them in – we pay them to do H&S checks – it was not really a partnership- they are really a group of stakeholders who want something done and we did it, they want permission to be there.’ Gororau District

‘We don’t have many Management Agreement s – maybe 2 – one for a mountain bike trail and another for a shooting Lease/maybe the latter is a permission. No Leases through WaY. It’s hard to separate out what are projects...maybe we have 7 or 8 projects – but they are permissions – bushcraft skills with kids/forest schools, carriage driving, Yamaha off road experience, centre for hydrology climate experiments, chain saw training.’

We have not given anything that is community based. Why? People are maybe not aware of the offer – it’s tucked away on the internet. Allotments are quite trendy now...maybe planting orchards in woods would be something communities could do. Forest schools are our most community minded thing.’ Gororau District

‘1 Management Agreement with a community – for a downhill mountain biking club - an annual agreement that has not come through the WaY process...’ Clocaenog, Moel Famau

‘1 Lease agreement with Shropshire WT to manage an area of land for wildlife- pre-WaY.’ Radnor

‘2 Management Agreements, both pre-dating WaY. 1 agreement with a Forest School. 1 agreement with Keepers’. Pembrokeshire

(I) The level of community uptake of WaY projects

Llais y Goedwig asked the Forest District staff for their assessment of the level of community uptake of WaY projects in their area; all but two of the interviewees felt the level of interest was low.
NRW Forest District staff views on level of community uptake of WaY projects

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Llais y Goedwig</td>
<td>Llais y Goedwig was keen to understand from the frontline NRW Forest District staff the reasons for the (low) level of community uptake of WaY projects in their area. Many staff felt that there is no real demand from community groups for WaY projects. A range of explanations for the low demand was offered; some explanations focused on NRW’s delivery of the</td>
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WaY scheme (onerous paperwork\textsuperscript{68}, too few NRW staff especially Community Rangers, people unaware of WaY and its opportunities). Staff also cited a lack of community capacity to form groups (lack of skills and knowledge of writing constitutions etc.) while the cost for communities of travelling to woodlands was also cited (alongside the cost of improving access to woodlands).

Some staff emphasized that NRW already provides communities with the recreational facilities they want, thus there is no rationale for communities to take on more responsibility themselves – rather the demand is for permission to use the facilities for events. One staff member noted that people wanted influence rather than responsibility i.e. to be a stakeholder rather than a partner.

Particularly in the valleys of South Wales, staff cited wider local issues that were affecting all forms of community activity, particularly Local Authority funding cuts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRW Forest District staff explanations for the level of community uptake of WaY projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>“There are not as many community groups willing to take this on as there used to be – e.g. local youth facilities have been decimated and lot of staff lost. \textit{It's not just forestry. People have lost interest in general – lack of Local Authority funding}. It's thought that because there are communities close to woods that people will scramble to take them on but it's not the case – WHY would they take the woodlands on - they don’t have the knowledge and they take the woods for granted – they use them - why would they feel the need to get constituted etc.” (South Wales valleys)</td>
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<td>“There is \textbf{not the interest out there in forestry} – people think there is – lot of talking and not a lot of doing.” (South Wales valleys)</td>
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<td>‘I don’t think there are the community groups out there that there once were – and the groups are not motivated enough to do it because of the \textit{local economic climate and the decimation of services} by council cuts. Potential for woodland enterprises? There are plenty of existing businesses for firewood – if we have a couple of hectares of unmanaged woodland why not just contact one of these businesses – it is very complicated to set up a group, to go through WaY, then there is health and safety etc – are you realistically going to find a couple of people from a deprived area to do that.’ (South Wales valleys)</td>
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<td>‘There is interest but 9 times out of 10 when they see the \textit{paper involved they lose interest}. I don’t think there is a lot of potential out there – for events yes – people want to use the estate for biking etc but for woodland management the applications are low – for community food growing yes. Overall there is more appetite to do things for \textit{personal gain} e.g. firewood processing’ (South Wales valleys)</td>
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<td>How do you find a community group in the first place – how will they get the skills to do it – it is a non-starter – \textit{it is too ambitious.}’ (South Wales Valleys)</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Reasons for this level of activity – 1) people are \textbf{not entirely aware of the process} 2) historically – i.e. people are \textbf{not aware that government} now lets them do more 3) community groups in this area have lots of \textbf{higher priorities for community projects} e.g. community food. There are lots of other offers for deprived communities.” (South Wales valleys)</td>
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\textsuperscript{68} It should be noted that the vast majority of people who return feedback forms are reported as being happy with the process and its ease – though clearly there aren’t many groups who have completed the project form, which is necessarily more onerous.
“We require the group to demonstrate they have the capacity to run the project – they need a constitution etc there are people who want to do nice things -they do not know how to set things up – write a constitution etc – asking too much of fledgling groups – better to give them a permission and other support first – let them build their capacity over 12 months – if we had a team to help build capacity over 12 months and then work to a Management Agreement that would be better.”

“Stumbling block for getting schools involved is buses/transport costs to the woods – if a community or school is not within walking distance of a wood then it is very difficult – one of the biggest constraints.”

‘Reasons for the low uptake – not a huge appetite to do something and we also have forests with access trails and infrastructure in them so maybe there is not the demand to do something new.” “We have had some tentative enquiries in the north– people who wanted to manage the wood and scavenge for firewood – it didn’t take off as there were issues of access (a new forest road is needed).” Brecon

We don’t have woodlands on peoples’ doorstep.\textsuperscript{69}

The public estate is undervalued – woodland are not being managed for maximum benefit – to get the woodlands being managed for maximum benefit we would have to stop clear felling – we would have to have more coppicing and continuous cover\textsuperscript{70} – more mixed woodlands and more communities looking after native woodlands – but this culture has gone. Also people are not aware of all the liabilities involved in the management of a wood – rights of way etc. There is so much under-utilisation – this is the challenge – we need more people and more volunteering.’

“In this area the forests are Leasehold to Welsh Water – it would be difficult to do community woodlands in these forests because of the Leases – upland coniferous forests around reservoirs.”

Sparsely populated areas – with ancient woodlands – but low populations of mostly farmers.”

Perhaps people aren’t aware that we can facilitate this sort of longer term community based project – or maybe in this area they don’t have the ideas or the inclination to come forward. Perhaps the idea of going into partnership with government is quite daunting for some community groups?”

“No community groups - The impression is that the woods are there and people can turn up and do what they want anyway – but they don’t know that everything depends on funding e.g. insurance. Also there is a reluctance with the staff to do it – it is a lot of time – we had a Community Ranger some 12 years ago and we all did that then 3 years later the jobs all disappeared – less people on the ground. It’s unusual for communities to do things – they have an idea but they don’t know how to do it.!

Maybe there is a fundamental over-estimation of the demand for community woodlands – in Brechfa there is the example of Radnor Forest Valleys Group – it has a hard core of half a dozen people – but it could not attract others in.”

Main reason –when we have discussions with communities on what they want from forests – we as NRW are able to provide what they want. Most people don’t want to manage a site or take on responsibility – they want to influence- it’s about stakeholder involvement.’ Gororau

‘The main reason is the number of groups in the locality – I would just put it down to there being few groups –the ones that see the woodland and want to do something come forward.’ Ceredigion

\textsuperscript{69} Except in the south wales valleys

\textsuperscript{70} This is Woodlands for Wales policy
The area I cover is very sparse – they don’t see the need for anything there – they just want to walk the dog. Some people like to be involved in committees and organisations and others don’t.’ Crychan, Irfan

Maybe it is difficult for people to see what is involved in the management of a site – you would have had to have woodland management experience to have the confidence – and would NRW give over a site without a track record?

(n) Recommendations to improve community uptake of WaY projects

Llais y Goedwig asked the frontline staff for their recommendations for improving the level of community uptake of WaY projects; what more could either NRW or Llais y Goedwig do?

NRW Forest District71 staff recommendations on improving the level of community uptake

‘Maybe there could be somebody who could educate and support the form filling – explaining how easy it can be to get the relevant insurance etc – often people have an idea and then the hard thinking comes in and the idea fizzles out – they need educating through the process. We don’t have the staff to give them enough encouragement – that is the way forward. Emyr Roberts is big on getting communities involved on our land – we are stalling with everything – it will come in time’.

‘Someone is needed to hold their hand, to get the groups going – I don’t feel I am allowed to in my role.’

‘Change the policy on Management Agreement s – not just ticking boxes to force people down a particular route – do it in stages – a permission first and then a Management Agreement. The WaY team keeps saying Management Agreements but we need to build community capacity first.’

Forms and risk assessments etc…..new groups don’t have a clue….it would help them if they could see a suite of templates that have already been filled out….we need to be able to say we can support you…. help them at an early stage when the enthusiasm is high… people want to see copies of other Management Agreements etc. …and then get on and do something practical on the ground.’

‘Get a dedicated team or enter a partnership with yourselves (LlyG). The objective of a dedicated team would be to go out and talk to communities – hold open days where they can talk to us, drop in sessions etc… get the information out there.’

‘If you have people in your team with a community/recreation background you can do this….but there is no unit or collective group on this in Wales – does NRW need a dedicated recreation/comms unit to force the issue- need something at higher and lower levels. If it is to succeed as a successful process it needs to have a stronger i.e. dedicated team dealing with it. The CR role in south Wales is like a community development person – it is slightly outside normal business as usual for NRW. CCW has a project which has mostly ex community development staff – a dedicated team.’

‘Partnership officers – making the links on the ground – it has to be on the ground not just on the internet.’

71 District names not included to preserve anonymity of some recommendations
Promotion – any sort. Maybe just give ourselves 12 months to really push it – to see what the demand is - but don’t do it in a half-hearted way e.g. do it at the Royal Welsh - promoting ourselves (as an organisation) has been a problem all along – we don’t promote ourselves at motor sports events even when they are on our land...we are very poor at this.’

‘Recommendation – going for it on a 12 month basis – just go for it – if Barbara can get clearance – really push it – we have talked about it and nothing has happened – whether there is a problem higher up with promoting it we don’t know – or whether just waiting for NRW to settle.’

‘It’s about spreading the word – it would be useful for community groups who have had a positive experience to publicize it – groups will empathise more with other groups and perhaps they could allay any concerns that they might have. Once groups engage with the staff they realise that we are accommodating and enabling. We need to make it as easy as possible to engage with us – try to slim things down as much as possible in terms of paperwork.’

Promote it. Getting hold of a site is often the most difficult thing for a group – so promote it – we have the process now. NRW – pushing it more. The website is pretty poor now – also a bit more press coverage on projects and getting the message out to groups – letting them know this process exists.’

‘My recommendation is for more promotion of WaY by NRW – and making it easier – it should be the first link on the website (after the flooding number). If we want people to do it we need to tell people it’s there – 99% don’t know about it – people see the wood and walk their dog and they don’t know that they have the right to do something – could we have a list of current projects on the website with details so people could email them – a list of projects would not cost much.’

Advertising WaY – so many people out there are not aware of what they can do. Also people are trying to organise walks etc and don’t know they need permissions etc to cover the health and safety aspect – we need to get the positive message out there. WaY covers so much really – people are not aware of the many different things you can do – so people generally ask for permission to do the regular things that they have seen.’

‘Publicity? I have never been in favour of really publicising it – if someone is in a group and has an idea they will find us. And it’s also about getting the right woodland – Ty Llwyd is an ideal wood for WiseWoods and the woods for the Scouts is also ideal.’

‘Insurance – why do we need to say on the form that you must have £5m cover...it seems very high for people....how much does that actually cost – we don’t know.’

‘I suspect there is not more that can be done – there is a lot of use of our woodlands in an informal way already. Yes, people get together when there is a threat (like sale of English FC woods) – I don’t think there is anything we could do to generate more interest – the proximity of the woodlands to the community is key. Where you have a community of interest eg in mountain biking then they will rock up and travel.’

‘First the communities need to come...they need to be educated to understand that the woodlands in wales are under-utilised – it is about educating people about what the woodlands can do, about what they could be like – it’s a long term job, needs funding and tax relief and volunteers. Educating people about the underutilised forests and about proper forest management – creating a demand for it - along the lines of the work being done by Sustainable Forest Management Ltd in
Wales (Philippe Morgan). Through resource planning – forest plans should be considering the community aspect as well as the clear fell system and the protection of the environment and the economics – there are budget issues though.’

‘Community woodlands could be of interest but it needs a lot more in terms of access improvement – and attention to biodiversity – not just scavenging for firewood – it needs to be part of a broader package of work that is of benefit to both partners (and the woods).’

Getting information to communities about what we can do with them ...without a Lease or Management Agreement – eg opening up a forest/bringing forward the time we do a flailing programme. Getting information to communities– rather than asking for permissions communities can ask NRW to change work programmes. We don’t tend to get this dialogue with communities soon enough or often enough.’

‘WaY - It’s not a big part of our job because there is no demand...it is hard to see where it is going to go.’

‘I honestly don’t see the demand – I don’t see what we could do (differently). Could we make decisions about giving away assets – they have a market value’.

‘In terms of Management Agreement s – getting people to manage our land – I don’t know what could be done to make things easier – if you haven’t got the interested people in the first place – it’s an opinion based on where I work and live – I work with the local authority youth service – they are demoralised – looking after their own jobs – they are doing more for less already – there are more important agendas than woodlands – you can send out as many questionnaires as you like and you can put it on a wish list but you have to be realistic.’

‘From my point of view I don’t see massive numbers of community groups that are either (a) motivated enough to manage a wood long term – Penmoeallt is ok but it is time intensive for me and it depends on the people on the committee – getting routine things done is hard – all the emphasis seems to be on the capital not on the maintenance – people always move onto the next project (b) or have the skills to be able to produce a project of good enough quality to get funding or landowner support in my geographical area – sparsely populated.’

What the CWGs can do far surpasses what NRW can do – in terms of intensity of management – the practical body of skills surpasses what we can do. What about splitting the woods into smaller blocks?

The responses from the Forest District staff varied greatly. Some forestry staff focused on the need for additional staff to help encourage communities through the process while others also saw the value of a dedicated team to go out and talk to communities about WaY.

Similarly some staff thought that promotion of WaY was the key. Others did not see a need for publicizing WaY but stressed the importance of having suitable and accessible woodlands nearby. A few staff focused on the potential for communities to manage under-utilised woodlands (and the associated need for NRW to move beyond clear felling).

A few staff saw opportunities for refining aspects of the WaY process itself; for instance by moving gradually from permissions to Management Agreement s as community capacity is built.
However some staff are also of the view that there is nothing NRW could do differently as there was no demand from communities for WaY projects.

Some staff thought that there could be opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations such as Llais y Goedwig.
5.3. Community Woodland Group interview results

The aim of the interviews was to hear the views of community groups operating on the WGWE, to learn about their projects on the WGWE, their tenure arrangement, governance and their experience of the WaY process.

(a) Community Woodland Groups interviewed

The 13 community groups interviewed are from all four Forest Districts, with 5 from Coed y Cymoedd, 4 from Llanymddfri, 3 from Coed y Mynydd and 1 from Coed y Gororau.

The area of WGWE represented by these 13 community groups amounts to approximately 676 hectares. When looked at on a Wales-wide scale, this is just 0.5% of the WGWE. NRW is not currently able to provide figures on the total area of WGWE under Community Management Agreement or Lease.

![Figure 14: Activities undertaken on the Estate by the community groups interviewed (n=12).](image)

All the community groups interviewed are engaged in ‘recreation and access’ activities on the Estate. 92% (11 groups) mentioned ‘social activities and events’; 83% (10 groups) undertake ‘recreation and education’ activities; 83% (10 groups) are involved in woodland management for conservation and biodiversity; 58% (7 groups) are engaged in producing crafts and woodland products; while 33% (4 groups) said they are engaged in ‘woodland management for timber’ and 17% (2 groups) mentioned

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72 Ideally, all the community groups who have applied to WaY since 2011 would have been contacted as part of this report. However, as outlined in section 4, NRW data on Management Agreements and Leases was not made available until after the scheduled interview period; Llais y Goedwig identified 20 community groups involved in projects on the WGWE from other sources, of which 13 were interviewed in autumn 2013 and spring 2014. Refer to Appendix 6 for a list of the groups interviewed and to section 5.1.9(b) for Llais y Goedwig’s ‘best guess’ list of community uptake of WaY.

73 Based on 10 of the 13 groups

74 Note that this is an indicator for all woodlands in WfW that should be monitored annually by the Welsh Government.

75 The analysis does not include the group in Coed y Gororau as they are not currently operating on the Woodland Estate.
‘other’ activities. None of the groups in Llanymddrefri are managing the woodland for timber and only one group is involved in crafts and woodland products.

(b) Tenure arrangements with NRW

The 13 community woodland groups interviewed were asked to describe their current tenure arrangement with NRW. Fig. 15 below summarises the tenure arrangements.

![Community group tenure arrangement with NRW](image)

Figure 15: Community group tenure arrangements with NRW, including those in place before the start of WaY and those that have used or are using WaY (n=13).

Almost half of the 13 groups interviewed (6 groups or 46%) had pre-WaY Agreements in place; of these one has an informal agreement, three have Management Agreements, one has a Lease and one group had purchased their woodland.

Of the other 7 groups interviewed, 4 groups are currently in negotiation with NRW through WaY, 1 group\(^{76}\) approached NRW for a Management Agreement but the process stalled at the time of writing (and could be regarded as an unsuccessful application).

Only two of the groups interviewed have successfully agreed tenure arrangements with NRW through WaY; one for a Management Agreement and one for a 20 year Lease through WaY in 2011 (building on a pre-Way Lease originally negotiated in 1996.)

\(^{76}\) In Coed y Gororau
Community Woodland Groups interviewed currently in negotiation with NRW for a Management Agreement through WaY (4 groups)

“The background to the group - we have been told that the woodland will be handed over to us, at present NRW are in the process of taking it out of their harvesting plan and designating it for a community woodland group led by [the group]. We have done a 3 year community consultation to bring a group together and a vision/plan for the woods. We have a continued dialogue with NRW regarding this. The WaY process was initiated on the advice of the NRW forest education team, who advised us to fill in the form for the education activities as part of our larger plan. However this has since been halted by other NRW forest staff, as the forest is not yet been taken out of the harvesting plan and perhaps because we need to apply for permission for the entire management plan.” CyC

“In 1996 we negotiated a 10 year management plan for development work [for a piece of woodland], which evolved following this successful work into management of a wider area of woodland. This was done before the WaY process was started. [We are] currently applying for permissions ongoing for general activity, with a view to evolving this via the WaY process into a community Management Agreement in Feb 2014.” CyC

“There has been frustration and confusion because we have already completed one 3 year application. NRW informed us the form was not received their end. At the next meeting the form was presented with documentation, but the NRW LAM was not present, and we were informed that the application process had also changed. We were given the new guidance to reapply.”

Until spring 2012 we used the [WaY] process to gain permissions to use the site for courses and events. Since then we have been in negotiations to create a Management Agreement, to cover our ongoing work. It has taken time, with different staff giving different advice, or expressing concerns on two specific areas during negotiations – whether we needed a Lease or Management Agreement, and whether we needed to go for planning permission for current workshop retrospectively.” CyM

“[Professional foresters] gave us lots of advice including initial management plan for [the woodland]. I contacted [the LAM], he met us in the woods twice to discuss the proposal, and then he got in contact with [the Land Agent]. I then filled in the WaY forms, and then had a meeting with [the Land Agent] on site. She outlined a potential obstacle - that the community woodland project we were proposing, to manage and plant the woodland for biodiversity for firewood and other products was no different from activities that the FC do already, not additional feature. On this basis they could not legally proceed. The agreement was not seen through to completion. [The LAM] and [the Land Agent] advised us to wait until NRW was launched, as they hoped that objectives would potentially evolve, and they should contact them 6 months down the line. I did this, they said NRW was moving slowly and that things had not changed. At this present time, we are now too busy to pursue this further, but would be interested in the future.” Cy

77 An additional issue for this group negotiating a Management Agreement is that the group needs to be able to present NRW with clear statements of its intentions regarding woodland management. However, in order to do so the group needs funds and expertise to develop woodland management proposals. One potential source of funding is Glastir, but there are constraints to securing Glastir funding for groups on NRW land; one of which is that the Group must have a Management Agreement in place.
“Our agreement continues to be more informal. The woodland is just part of our work, the main focus until now has been the iron age hill fort, but this is surrounded by forestry, so we intend to start branching out to include this in our work. So at the moment we have not done much with Forestry, but the reason we joined LyG this year is because we would like to action this more, working with NRW. This was kick started this year with the need to build fences to protect the mountains, so we have been in contact with NRW to enquire access to the woodland and use the timber from the forests. However since then the forest has been diagnosed with Phytophthora, so everything is still up in the air. We are also keen to work long term on creating footpaths, access etc.” CyC

“[The group has a] ten year Management Agreement with NRW. This covers general maintenance, conservation, active looking after woodland and events (theatre, outdoor classroom, social gatherings). This agreement was initiated by a community day with 600 attendees and Forestry staff to talk about what they wanted to do with the Woodland – lots of ideas where taken down on post its, and then collected together to form a plan. First the woodland was thinned, then we received £80K funding from Cydcoed. There were a few setbacks in terms of deciding on activities and storms, but we then created a project and started the 10 year agreement. In the past we have been seen a best practice case study, with various forestry staff visiting to see our work.” CyC

“The 10 year Management Agreement with NRW negotiated in 2005 still stands. This agreement allows us access to the site, to undertake social activities and training events. There is also restricted access for power tools. Our 10 year Management Agreement evolved through the Cydcoed programme in 2005. The Cydcoed officers were Forestry staff – we met with [the Cydcoed officer] to discuss what we wanted from the site. [the Cydcoed officer] had access to the land management department in Forestry Commission. [the Cydcoed officer] negotiated on our behalf – an intermediary between the land agent, Forestry Commission and ourselves. It was time consuming, but [the Cydcoed officers] support as our single point of contact was valuable.” CyM

“We have a Management Agreement with NRW that is 12 – 13 years old (renewed once if not twice, roughly every 6 years). This includes events, classroom area, arts trail, new paths. The woodland was designated a SSSI in the 1970s due to rare trees. A community member founded the group then. I’m not sure how the Management Agreement started, but I was part of the last renewal six years ago – we had a brief consultation with the LAM (in addition to the regular discussion about what’s possible in the woods), he then created a simple written agreement, we signed it.” Llanymddyfri

“We still have a Management Agreement. In 2007, a resident approached the Forestry Commission to enquire about using the woodland for community purpose. Relationship between
enquirer and the Forestry Commission was not very positive (the enquirer is known to be difficult), so discussions did not evolve. In 2009, a new group picked this up again. We approached the Forestry Commission to initiate conversation on access to the woodland. In 2010 – 11, the association was formed and ongoing discussions initiated about set up and management of woodlands with group and NRW. In 2012, we were granted the Management Agreement by NRW. Opening ceremony in partnership with NRW – great community venture with local officer putting up bird boxes with school children.\footnote{Llanymddyfri}

Community Woodland Groups interviewed with FCW/NRW Leases (2 groups)

“We currently have a 20 year Lease with NRW. In 1996 a police officer proposed setting up a group with derelict building and forest in mind Leased by FCW from Church of Wales. We initiated this by contacting the FCW area manager. A series of discussions and a written proposal was done, and the Lease granted at cost of £1000 pa with FCW for 1 acre of woodland + two community Management Agreement s - one an additional specific land, and one for series footpaths (each required quarterly paperwork). In 2011 we applied for a new Lease with a long term application through the Way process, to include all our activities for a twenty Lease on a specific area. This was ahead of the former Lease running out, but it was good to update our processes now Way is in place. The exception to the Way negotiated Lease is one off events outside of the agreed area where we fill in a WaY permissions form. They also reduced the Lease cost £500 pa, now paid quarterly.” CyC

We have a 25 year Lease agreement - for a building (which would have been demolished if we had not taken it on), the car park area, and the woodland (1 hectare). We negotiated our Lease with FC 12 years ago before the WaY was in existence. Very much the local district manager idea – keen on community involvement. He came to our meetings, and first mentioned \[the site\] as a possibility. A group formed initially with interests in tourism, forest school, access to timber, woodland management – very mixed. In the end what was possible in terms of Lease and Cycoed funding is what dictated the final agreement. We started with a memorandum of agreement, which was worked up into a Lease by the FC legal department.” Llanymddyfri

Community Woodland Groups interviewed that have purchased woodland from FCW/NRW (1 group)

“We purchased our woodland in 2000 from NRW. I do not know the detail about process, and other members who knew have since left. I know that at the time the community acted as they felt that the land for sale might get into the hands of the wrong people\footnote{This was the main ‘thrust’. I understand that this purchase process was positive, and that this good relationship with NRW has continued informally since. The set up since purchase has been that two areas of NRW land surround the [Woodland]. The access to NRW land is through the Community Woodland and vice versa. So we now have a relationship where NRW maintain access (in particular post harvesting) and we keep an eye on woodlands for which NRW pay us £300 p/a. This helps us mentioned [the site] as a possibility. A group formed initially with interests in tourism, forest school, access to timber, woodland management – very mixed. In the end what was possible in terms of Lease and Cycoed funding is what dictated the final agreement. We started with a memorandum of agreement, which was worked up into a Lease by the FC legal department.” Llanymddyfri}! This was the main ‘thrust’. I understand that this purchase process was positive, and that this good relationship with NRW has continued informally since. The set up since purchase has been that two areas of NRW land surround the [Woodland]. The access to NRW land is through the Community Woodland and vice versa. So we now have a relationship where NRW maintain access (in particular post harvesting) and we keep an eye on woodlands for which NRW pay us £300 p/a. This helps us

\footnote{NRW notes that the terms of this sale were tailored to community needs and it was offered for sale because the community was keen to buy it.}
(c) Awareness of the Woodlands and You process

The 13 community groups interviewed were asked if they had used WaY and if so, for what type of project. Of the groups interviewed 46% (6 groups) had used WaY, 23% (3 groups) had heard of WaY but not used it and 30% (4 groups) had not heard of WaY.

Of the 6 community groups interviewed that have used WaY, 1 has successfully negotiated a 20 year Lease, 3 have used WaY for permissions for project activities and are now negotiating longer-term arrangements, a 5th group is currently negotiating an agreement and a 6th application has stalled.

Community Woodland Groups interviewed that have used WaY

“Yes, to gain a 20 year Lease in 2011.” CyC

“Yes we are using it currently [to negotiate a Management Agreement].” CyC

“Yes we have used WaY. However I would say that as a group we have a limited understanding of the overall framework in terms of levels of engagement. With the evolution of the new community woodland group, which includes the FEI as well as various other members interested in non-education activities, we have been advised to negotiate two levels of agreement with NRW. For FEI’s regular activities we are applying for a three year permission agreement. The rest of the group, once constituted, intend to apply for a Management Agreement, pending the development of their woodland management plan in collaboration with NRW.” CyM

“[the group is] currently applying for permissions ongoing for general activity, with a view to evolving this via the WaY process into a community Management Agreement in February 2014. Since WaY started, we have used it for other projects within other local woodlands at permissions level for various one off projects, particularly for Actif Woods Wales, Coed Lleol’s project.” CyC

“We have used WaY. Until spring 2012 we used the process to gain permissions to use the site for
courses and events. Since then we have been in negotiations to create a Management Agreement, to cover our ongoing work”. CyM

“I have heard of the process. I did fill in them in, as well as a proposal form in 2012. [The LAM] and [the Land Agent] were our contacts.” CyG

Community Woodland Groups interviewed that have heard of WaY but not used it

“No, we haven’t [used WaY] but we will be using it in January when we renew our 10 year Management Agreement. We have not seen these forms yet, but we will be sitting down with NRW at a meeting planned to discuss the way forward.” CyC

“No we have not used it. I am aware of WaY and know people who have used it. We negotiated our Lease with FC 12 years ago before the WaY was in existence. Recently our group made an enquiry to the local area manager regarding dormice management activity, asked if WaY process was appropriate, response was it’s easier to have in an informal agreement.” Llanymddyfri

“We aware of the WaY process, but have not used it to date. Our 10 year agreement with NRW was negotiated before this time (2005). We will renew our agreement in the next year, which we have been told we need to do via the WaY process. It feels a bit frustrating – we wish there was a simpler renewal procedure for those groups who already have an agreement with NRW. We feel we have an excellent reputation and good relationship with NRW staff, so to go back to scratch with a 20 page form is annoying (in addition to the extra bureaucracy with being in Snowdonia National Park). We recognise however that it is an opportunity to have a better agreement – we know we can do more with the site than we are allowed to do presently – more management than purely access. It’s clear that the attitude of FC towards activities such as structure building have become more relaxed since we first negotiated our agreement, so we are keen to move with that” CyM

Community Woodland Groups interviewed that have not heard of WaY

“No. We have not heard of [WaY] or used it. We are aware that there are opportunities for access including one off permissions or longer term Agreements. Our agreement is more informal.” CyC

“No, not to my memory. I don’t think I’ve heard of it.” Llanymddyfri

“No. Was not aware of it. We purchased our woodland in 2000 from NRW.” Llanymddyfri

“I am aware that we filled in a form prior to the Management Agreement being created and agreement. Not sure if this was part of WaY or not. It’s probably been mentioned, but I’ve forgotten! Once this was done FC sent us a draft Management Agreement, which we were happy with, so signed.” Llanymddyfri
(d) Community applications to WaY that were turned down

No figures on WaY applications that were unsuccessful were made available.

However, in the course of the interviews with Forest District staff, a case in Coed y Gororau was cited in which an application from a community group for WGWE land on which to plant trees and harvest firewood was turned down by the Land Agent. The basis of the refusal was the Agent’s interpretation of the Forestry Act, in particular (a) the degree to which NRW can devolve forest management and (b) the requirement for organisations to demonstrate ‘additionality.’ This unsuccessful application is explored in the case study below.

Case Example of a Community Based Application to WaY that was turned down

The Forest District interviewee (LAM) explained that their only WaY project application had come from a small but established group wanting to Lease land for planting trees for nuts and fruit and for harvesting firewood. The LAM noted that “Eventually we had to turn down their application last year….we asked them to get in touch with us again this year once NRW has settled down. I think it was a legal issue about the use of the land for food/fruit maybe?”

Llais y Goedwig contacted the community group and spoke to them about their experience of WaY. The group’s representative explained that: Personal contacts with Confor and a Better Woods for Wales Woodland Agents “gave us lots of advice including an initial management plan for [the woodland]. I contacted [the LAM], he met us in the woods twice to discuss the proposal, and then he got in contact with the Land Agent. I filled in the WaY forms, and had a meeting with the [Agent] on site. The [Agent] outlined a potential obstacle - the community woodland project we were proposing was no different from activities that the FC do already, it was not an additional feature. On this basis they could not legally proceed.

“The [LAM] and the [Land Agent] advised us to wait until NRW was launched, as they hoped that objectives would evolve. I did this (after 6 months) and they said NRW was moving slowly and things had not changed. We are too busy to pursue this further, but would be interested in the future.”

Following this interview, Llais y Goedwig contacted the Land Agent to find out more. These are the main points from the conversation:

- The [group’s] idea sounded great - coppicing and planting trees.
- A site visit took place – we explained to the group that under section 83 of the Welsh Government Act the woods are at our disposal to manage for the Welsh Government – the provision to enter into Management Agreement s applies where the community woodland group would be doing something in addition to what we do/additionality.
- In this case the applicant was not providing additionality.
- (What would qualify as additionality?) – e.g. putting in shelters or benches or car parking facilities or walk ways – structures going in that we couldn’t afford to do. These would need to be erected and maintained as part of a Management Agreement.
- Additionality –is open to interpretation – it may be changing as NRW evolves. The Act is not clear and colleagues in other districts may have taken another view. Advice was taken from the county land scheme. It was not really an allotment project as such – it was woodland
management and we don't have the right to subcontract woodland management.

- A traditional ‘allotment’ project would have been more favourably regarded than woodland management
- (What about a hypothetical case where a community group wanted to take on un-managed NRW woodland?) We would have to look at the powers we have been granted and we would have to look at the site- and the group’s capacity – it would come down to interpretation.
- We were frustrated that we could not work with that particular group as they had good ideas.
- The Act itself makes ‘cold’ reading – examples from WaY would help with interpretation. Also examples on the website would help groups see what is possible
- In general we need to encourage more groups.

The Land Agent did not take the case to the Woodland and You Forum\(^{80}\) and Woodlands for People staff were therefore not aware of the situation at the time. Llais y Goedwig asked the Woodlands for People team for clarification\(^{81}\); it was explained that by law NRW cannot sub contract forest management to another organisation but they can sanction an agreed management plan and that there was no requirement in WaY to prove additionality. NRW also explained that when groups ‘manage woods on our behalf they are probably doing work that we would not normally do –so it is probably additional – it’s an issue that needs clarity.’

(e) Community Woodland Group experience of the WaY application process

The six groups that had experience of submitting WaY applications\(^{82}\) were asked to describe how they found the process. Their experience with WaY highlighted a number of factors that, from the group’s viewpoint, can either help or hinder the WaY process. Of the interviewees, 4 are currently negotiating a Management Agreement with NRW through the WaY, 3 of these groups had already been using a ‘Permission’ for activity/event application, 1 group successfully negotiated a Lease, and 1 group had their application ‘temporarily’ unable to proceed\(^{83}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Woodland Groups interviewed:</th>
<th>Experience of WaY application process among – helpful aspects of the application process(^{84})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community groups providing good evidence in the WaY application</td>
<td>“Our meticulous evidence of participants and volunteer hours impressed them, and was useful in negotiating new cheaper Lease price.” CyC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRW staff understanding issues that affect community groups and working with us to find solutions</td>
<td>“NRW made quarterly payments possible, to make things financially easier, which was appreciated.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{80}\) Due to these interviews highlighting this issue a new procedure has been put in place by the Woodlands and You Forum; no WaY application can now be stopped without it being taken to the WaY Forum.

\(^{81}\) Barbara Anglezarke per comm. 5\(^{th}\) March 2014

\(^{82}\) See section 5.3 (c) for details

\(^{83}\) See section 5.3. (d) for details about the issues this group encountered when negotiating a Management Agreement for a community woodland group in Coed y Gororau.

\(^{84}\) This question is also included in the NRW M&E Framework for WaY Applicant Feedback Form (Arad)
Group has recently undertaken a process of woodland management planning at which the NRW staff were present (included 2 x Education, Local Area Manager and Natural Heritage Officers). They have all been verbally supportive and gave their time (including voluntary at evenings and weekends). They are clear about the parameters for woodland management in [the woodland]. As a result we felt supported.” CyM

NRW staff making time to meet the group at the woodland site
“...best thing about the process was meeting all the key NRW staff from different departments and undertaking discussions and woodland walks – this has been invaluable. We have also been able to use this expertise with other projects – so it’s built capacity to undertake other similar projects across the Valley too.” CyC
“Overall it was easier than we thought – the flexibility and support was great. In particular Officers being willing and able to walk the woods to discuss the plans has been good, as well as the support in providing ongoing permissions ahead of the Management Agreement being finalised.” CyM

NRW staff being open to new ideas from the community group
“Very open to new ideas from the beginning and ongoing, for example, a request to become a Dark Skies site was welcomed with open arms.” CyC

Simplification of WaY forms
“Permissions form has been improved over time – simplification has made it easier to complete.” CyM

Good communication between NRW staff and the community group
“We were able to contact the local officer when needed for advice over the phone and email when needed, as well as a walk through the woodlands with the officer and other NRW colleagues on several occasions” Llanymddyfri

Quick proactive responses and input from NRW staff
“We find the NRW officers very easy to talk to. If someone cannot help, they find else quickly.” CyC

Community Woodland Groups interviewed:
Experience of WaY application process – unhelpful aspects

Issues with filling out the forms
“The form does not fit all sizes, so we had to make some adjustments to ensure we provided all the details needed for this wide ranging proposal, with many different activities.” CyC
“Whilst I had the impression from the initial meeting was positive to creating a community woodland, the WaY forms were not set out in a way that would help us outline our project. I just adapted to the structure.” CyG

Administration errors and system changes causing delays and additional work for the groups
“There has been frustration and confusion because we have already completed one three year application. NRW informed us the form was not received their end. At the next group meeting the form was presented with documentation, but the NRW local area officer was not present, and we were informed that the application process had also changed. We were given the new guidance to reapply.” CyM

Lack of collaborative community focused approach by some NRW staff
“...there were two different styles of engagement between the Officers and the group – one Officer was offering suggestions and guidance based on their knowledge and experience of the woodland, one was – ‘you tell me what you want, and I’ll tell you yes or no’. We welcome the first approach, but a lack of open dialogue with the key Local Area Officer made partnership planning difficult, ultimately affecting how far we could set short term objectives for the woodland management plan. The Local Area Officer often stated that he did not want to commit to something that he would have to say no to in future, because of decisions made above him. We recognised that he was in a difficult position, and that it is difficult to remain flexible in discussions with a group with multiple ideas and potential requirements. However this did not stop other Officers having an open dialogue that we found very useful.” CyM

Lack of NRW staff consistency in advice
“It has taken time, with different staff giving different advice, or expressing concerns on two specific areas during negotiations – whether we needed a Lease or Management Agreement, and whether we needed to go for planning permission for current workshop retrospectively.” CyM

Lack of public awareness of the different options available through WaY
“...we were not aware of the distinction between levels in terms of permissions, management, purchase, etc. and that we could use this process to apply for longer-term projects similar to the old community engagement Agreements.”

NRW merger process caused advice and applications to be delayed
“...during these negotiations the Forestry Commission was going through a big shake up in becoming in NRW, and this has played a part – no one could say things for sure, as everything was changing.”

“One group in Coed y Mynydd that has not been included in the above analysis as the group has not yet been through a WaY application yet, but will be renewing their Management Agreement through WaY in the near future said:

“We will renew our agreement in the next year, which we have been told we need to do via the WaY process. It feels a bit frustrating – we wish there was a simpler renewal procedure for those groups who already have an agreement with NRW. We feel we have an excellent reputation and good relationship with NRW staff, so to go back to scratch with a 20 page form is annoying (in addition to the extra bureaucracy with being in Snowdonia National Park). We recognise however that it is an opportunity to have a better agreement – we know we can do more with the site than we are allowed to do presently – more management than purely access. It’s clear that the attitude of FC towards activities such as structure building have become more relaxed since we first negotiated our agreement, so we are keen to move with that.” CyM

Two additional points are made here, firstly that WaY does not allow for existing pre-Way projects to renew without going through the full application process; secondly that there may be benefits of

85 The group therefore ended up using permissions rather than project forms for ongoing long term projects.
going through the process for existing groups as it is an opportunity to review their Agreements and potentially negotiate better terms (also circumstances may have changed significantly in 10 years).

(f) Governance and Woodland Decision making

Llais y Goedwig asked the community groups that have entered into a Management Agreements with NRW (including those that pre-date WaY), ‘What is the process when making decisions about the woodland and its management - how are NRW involved? This question aims to give an insight into governance issues, who takes decision and how, and what the balance of power is’.

Generally the groups’ reported that there is a two-way dialogue between NRW and the group and that this works reasonably well. Most groups have regular meetings with their local NRW staff and feel included and consulted by NRW in the management of the woodland.

“Every woodland management meeting about current work in the woods includes us. Our opinions count, decisions are made collaboratively. Recent example was NRW rescheduling work to ensure that a nesting Goshawk we were aware of was not disturbed.” CyC (Lease negotiated in 2011)

“We decide what we would like to do and have an open conversation with the local officer to check and make decisions. We feel like the balance of power is good.” Llanymddyfri (Management Agreement negotiated pre-WaY)

Problems have occurred when the groups are not consulted or involved in decision making. For example:

“...forest users repeatedly knocked down NRW gates, so their solution was to remove gates and put in cattle grids. This has not helped! NRW did not consult us, and it felt like a quick cost effective solution for them.” CyC (informal agreement negotiated pre-WaY)

When the Agreements are still in negotiation decision making may be unbalanced. For example:

“This [decision making process] is not in place as yet but the hope is that there is open discussion, and a balanced collaborative decision making process... At the moment, however, due to the increasing bureaucratic nature of the process to date, it feels as if NRW hold the power over decisions about the woodland and its management.” CyM (Management Agreement in negotiation)

In some cases, once the Agreements are in place the group felt that there was no need for a decision making process:

“NRW are not involved – no process. There does not need to be one as it’s just for education and events, so our activities are no concern of theirs. As long we both keep to the terms of the Lease, there is no discussion.” Llanymddyfri (Lease negotiated pre WaY)

Another case showed that the group was unsure of how NRW involvement would change with them taking on greater ownership of the woodland:

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86 For more information on community participation in the Welsh Woodland Estate see section 2.2
“We would like an ongoing relationship with NRW, as their expertise is great, but it seems that they are keen to sign the forest over at some point and let us get on with it, in a way similar to Blaen Bran.” CyC (Management Agreement or Lease in negotiation)

(g) Relationships with NRW staff

The Community Woodland Groups interviewed were asked about their relationship with their local NRW staff, usually the Local Area Manager or Community Ranger. The responses given by the groups were assigned to one of four broad categories ranging from very positive to negative (see Fig. 16).

![Figure 17: Community Woodland Groups’ relationships with local NRW staff (n=13)](image)

70% (9) of the community groups interviewed had positive or very positive relationships with their local NRW staff. A further 15% (2) described their relationship as ‘mixed’ and 15% (2) as negative. The issues the community groups felt positively or negatively impacted on their relationship with NRW staff were also collated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Woodland Groups interviewed: experience of working with NRW – helpful aspects of this relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contactable and approachable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Excellent. They are contactable and easy to get on with. We appreciate their straightforward approach.” Llanymddyfri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Local officer is good listener and very reasonable. They always get back to you if you have an enquiry.” CyC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The LAM is available, as well as support staff, whenever we need to speak to someone. Support staff have helped us when working in the woods, which is great.” Llanymddyfri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative and flexible approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very positive. Good collaborative working relationship.” CyC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59
“...the contractors brought in by NRW, who are also very good, and engage in our work, recent example was one moving a large log to an area for various education groups to enjoy.” CyC

“They are generally supportive. They have ensured that we keep our storeroom intact, even when there were plans to demolish the building around it. They have attended all the planning events for the group (including some voluntary time). They have assisted in gaining permission at short notice (but have told us we cannot do this again).” CyM

“This relationship has got considerably better in the last few years with a change of Local Area Manager who is much more flexible. There is an excellent level of respect. It helps that they live and work in the area – they know the people, woodlands, community – invaluable. It also helps that they are slightly more relaxed and open to discussion, rather than sticking to the rules and worrying about longer formal processes and permissions as previous officers have. They are also very open-minded and easy to discuss different options and work out processes together. We notice that our work inspires them. A good example of the level of trust that has evolved – we were recently granted permissions to have fires as part of our events, which was impossible a few years ago.” CyM

“Helpful and supportive. Good engagement and attitude. If there are problems they are worked through and if we are not able to do something, the reasons for this are explained. They are willing to negotiate and understand different requirements with different groups that evolve over time. An example - We feel lucky to be the first community woodland group to have a fire pit – we put forward a good argument about working with young people and anti-arson project, which they took on board, despite FCW being very against fires at the time.” CyC

“Support and enthusiasm from Biodiversity and Education teams has been great. The way we have collaboratively worked together with NRW to create a holistic plan has been really good.” CyC

Proactive approach

“They are proactive in making suggestions for new projects – a recent example is the suggestion of collaboration to create new themed footpaths.” CyC

Keeping groups well informed

“Everything is working well! E.g. we have had problems recently with concerns over disease and they have been great at keeping us informed with live updates as things develop, supporting us.” CyC

Quick response

“...if we report something, we get an email straight back and action is swift.” CyC

Granting permission for access or activities

“What is working well - Very helpful with our enquiries regarding access and timber for fences, and willing to give us access. This was encouraging.” CyC

“A good example of the level of trust that has evolved - we were recently granted permissions to have fires as part of our events, which was impossible event a few years ago.” CyM

Locally based staff

“It helps that they are live and have worked in the area – they know the people, woodlands, community – invaluable... Local area manager being local means greater access to each other - we have had good meetings here on site.” CyM

“We do see our local area officer regularly off site as a member of the community. The relationship is good.” Llanymddyfri

Considerate approach when undertaking forest operations

“NRW undertook harvesting and quickly ensured that the access for community was restored immediately after.” Llanymddyfri
On the ground direct contact
“...on the ground site walks and face to face meetings are important. Through this our plans could be better communicated than on paper, and it allowed for human contact and fostering of understanding and respect. In particular this related to the challenges experienced by NRW and us – we got a better understanding of the liability that NRW staff face in negotiating these Agreements, and they could also see the challenges we face as a small charitable organisation.”
CyM

Facilitating paperwork and process
“The LAM keeps paperwork to a minimum for us, which is valuable – renewal of the last management plan was straightforward.” Llanymddyfri

Community Woodland Groups interviewed:
experience of working with NRW – unhelpful aspects of this relationship

Not keeping groups well informed
“Since our more direct enquiry about access to woodlands and use of timber, and the diagnosis of the disease has come about, it would of been good to know more about what their plans are. Updates have been incidental – us bumping into people in the woods, rather than direct approach to keep us updated. More open communication would be an improvement.” CyC

Lack of response to enquiries
“In retrospect - Asking of usual things were difficult when working with the local area officer such as bridge spec. There was no come back. We assume now that the WaY process would address this better, as its more formalised, and recorded for follow up. We would not be left in limbo.” Llanymddyfri

Timescales causing loss of momentum
“Little could be improved other than perhaps moving quicker on local projects. We are part of a FCW initiated and facilitated steering group of local forest users – essentially a pilot scheme to explore Heads of the Valley funding increase use of the forest for recreation. Process took a long time and is still in motion, with the FCW officer previously in charge no longer in the role. But a new officer has taken this up, so we are hopeful.” CyC

“Timescales – significant organisation and staff changes with FC and NRW and Communities First changes have held things up and created difficulties locally” CyC

Financial charges for community activities
“They have attempted to charge us for use of the woodland, which we have not previously been required to do (£60 for one day session undertaking forest school). We are told if we dispute this, we need to contact the NRW Senior Forestry Officer. We did this and the cost was withdrawn. We have never had these problems before. It feels as if we are constantly having to follow up disputes, for which we do not have the resources and energy.” CyM

Conflicts of commercial v/s community benefit
“Not enough of them on the ground! That means when they come to prioritise what they need to do – they have to do the forestry contracts as that brings in the money. The community benefit needs to have the same standing as making money from wood.” CyM
Paperwork that does not yield results or is perceived as excessive
“If anything could be improved it would be not so much paperwork!” Llanymddyfri
“Since they have been in post the process has been more bureaucratic and frustrating than we have ever experienced. There have been more conditions post permission being granted that we have to fulfill” CyM
“A reduction to the sheer amount of paperwork (acknowledge that the permissions level has got easier, as we have been applying long term, but for those starting out it is still a lot)” CyM

Lack of on the ground staff
“Not enough of them on the ground!” CyM

Difficulties getting permission for certain activities
“Fire is a really important part of being outdoors and a focus to many community woodland activities – we would like to see an easier process in future.” CyC

Internal blocks and barriers
“We meet up with them and they are keen, but often when they return to the office they get stopped! It seems like communication is not great between the team. We can see that some of this is perhaps reflective of the changes in organisation structure and ethos since NRW came into being. The education and biodiversity teams however have been very good, but at a recent meeting where they were very positive they later became disillusioned when returning to the office, when plans were scuppered.” CyC

Lack of clarity about WaY
“Improvements needed– A clearer understanding and guidance at stage of deciding which level to take (Lease, Management Agreement etc).” CyM

Lack of resources
“We could always use more resources to do things – e.g. the next thing is sorting out the landscape around the classroom, but I do not think that NRW can do this, we are negotiating with the LAM to see what’s possible.” Llanymddyfri
“Lack or resources internally at NRW since the merger. There has been a slight change in attitude since – not so easy to access people and help.” CyC

(h) Support for community groups working on the WGWE

Having identified some of the issues faced by the groups, the groups were asked (with regards to the challenges they had identified) what support they need to help meet these challenges.

Some groups said they have experienced good support: “It feels like everywhere we have turned we have had help and advice.” Llanymddyfri

87 The newly appointed LAM
“Biggest challenge is woodland crime, as well as potential fires during dry spells. We have a great network of support for this. Many times we thought we had problems, but a phone call or a meeting with NRW and they were sorted out.” CyC

| Community Woodland Groups interviewed:  
  experience on the WGWE – support needed |
|----------------------------------------|
| **Quicker response times**  
  “Quicker response through a formalised, but friendly/flexible system.” Llanymddyfri |
| **Local level decision making**  
  “Small Agreements being made at a local level.” Llanymddyfri |
| **Getting insurance for equipment and woodland infrastructure**  
  “The only difficulty we have at the moment is getting insurance for equipment, specifically our benches and tables. Have not asked our local officer yet, will do.” Llanymddyfri |
| **More opportunities to meet NRW staff on the ground**  
  “More opportunity for meetings on the ground between NRW and our group, to get a better idea of what we both do, our challenges and our future plans, to help collaborative work happen.” CyC |
| **Ideas and inspiration**  
  “More creative ideas for use of woodland as we develop our work – how the land could be used for education and other activities – inspiring resources and sharing with other groups?” CyC |
| **Information on WaY**  
  “More information on WaY – although realise that this explanation may of been stymied by the diagnosis of disease.” CyC |
| **Improving NRW staff capacity to work with communities**  
  “Training for Local Area Officers in communicating/working with community woodland groups, specifically – Clear parameters in how flexible they can be in their approach (removing fear backlash if they promise something wrong); Assistance in conducting open and positive communication at the same level; How to communicate the process to groups in a way that they appreciate/understand why there is a 6 week lead in etc.” CyM |
| **Local point of contact**  
  “A local officer that is based locally for initial enquiries, rather than centralised office.” Llanymddyfri |
| **Single point of contact for/in community**  
  “We have area management as far as woodlands, but not for community processes. What would help would be someone like this – a person who can be the single point of contact to take us through the process of the 20 page form, making sure we answer the questions correctly etc. Similar to [Cydcoed Officer] in 2005. This would include the local area officer in the negotiations, |

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88 The forest has been diagnosed with Phytophthora which has put negotiations on community access on hold.
so they can input early on when plans are still flexible, and understand how the agreement has evolved. If NRW want to achieve the ambition of a local point of contact, local knowledge and experience they need invest more resources at this level. We are concerned that the tension between community woodland work and commercial forestry we are experiencing in N.Wales will not allow this to happen. “CyM
“One single point of contact would have really helped, particularly with all the staff changes.” CyC

Process for fire use on WGWE
“Generally - there is currently an issue with fire use – it is difficult to get permission. Suggest training on fire creation/management using campfire guidance notes in order to provide paperwork that is adequate for WaY application.” CyM

Local and national WaY meetings
“...it would be great to see this WaY research evolve into perhaps local/national meetings to push this forward. That would bring in the Local Area Officers into the community woodland dialogue more, rather than just managing the end result.” CyM

Improve NRW switchboard
“Concern over current NRW switchboard set up – any CW coming in new would find it very hard to get the right person, and ultimately would speak to someone outside of their district, this is far from ideal.” CyM

Improve NRW interdepartmental links
“We deal with CCW, Environment Agency and FCW before NRW. Now NRW is operational, it’s been difficult to do work that links up all three of them. Forestry arm is easiest, but others are more difficult to engage now.” CyC

Links with other support agencies
“If we have known about LlyG earlier we definitely would have been in contact for advice and support.” CyC
“Ongoing advice for delivery of work from other groups/people – everything from writing tender documents to bridge building.” Llanymddyfri

Clearer guidance on planning
“Clear guidelines on the planning process in woodlands – it’s different from a conventional dwelling or business application. Resources such as case studies or advisory notes would be useful. It would have saved us time scouting for answers/solutions.” CyC

Specific woodland management issues
“NRW cleared some of the forest and piled up brash in a big pile. Still ongoing discussion about what should be done with this.” CyC
“More specialist woodland advice and support would be great, in particular education, habitat management, biodiversity – to inform our decision making and planning for the long term.” CyC

Two groups said it would be very helpful to have a single point of contact for the group. (Internal NRW guidance says that each WaY project should have a 'lead person' to take on this role – see Figure 6. It would appear that this may not being put into practice in all cases.)

(i) Extraction of forest products from the WGWE
The Introduction to WaY (2011) states ‘Requests to use small amounts of timber as part of your activities or project (for example woodland management training, making small items to sell) may be considered. All timber will be disposed of at market value.’ The groups were asked if there had been issues around extracting materials (fuel, timber, etc).

One of the community groups currently negotiating a Management Agreement through WaY is extracting a limited amount of timber ‘thinnings’ from Estate Woodland “Both parties have acknowledged that the value of the timber is not high - there are few decent saw logs in the wood and they are widely scattered. Most timber we use we import in and process at our sawmill. It is agreed that when we take timber, we take thinnings, around 10 trees a week. The impact is very small. The timber taken is reported to NRW. There has been no issues negotiating this, it’s been an open collaborative process.” CyM

An establishing group, also in Coed y Mynydd, aspires to extract timber but has encountered issues with timber being disposed of by NRW at market value “The wood has not been valued for fuel or timber as yet. Permission and an agreement with NRW for the wood to be used in this way has not yet been established. The community would like timber to be extracted and sold with the income being returned to the woodland for further woodland management. NRW insist that all wood extracted must be bought at the market rate - the community cannot afford this.”

An established group in Coed y Mynydd, with a Management Agreement pre-dating WaY, has not yet been able to use the timber on the site “We are not allowed to treat the site as a resource for timber, despite wanting to. That is something that we intend to tackle when renewing our Management Agreement. We believe there is potential in providing a service for NRW in the more accessible and economic sites within the forest. We believe we can also increase local employment.”

In Coed y Gororau, an application was rejected that had the aim of extracting thinning for firewood, though this may not have been the key problem in the application stalling “We had positive initial discussions about extracting firewood, thinnings. I think [the LAM] could tell we were interested in sustainable woodland management - our management plan outlined explicitly. However this did not get seen through to conclusion as conversation was stopped before this was discussed in detail.”

Two groups from Coed y Cymoeddd are also looking into the option of small scale extraction of timber, and there appear not to be any issues with the negotiations at this stage:

“We have discussed feasibility of extracting for firewood, charcoal and small amounts of timber for carpentry, so hoping to do milling on site. No indication of concerns from NRW to date.” CyC

“We are currently negotiating with NRW the possible use of some of the timber in a wood fuel community company. This is still in the early stages but looks promising.” CyC

The 5 groups negotiating access to forest products with NRW appear to be following social enterprise models where the income generated from the timber would go back to the woodland project and provide local employment. The groups report a variety of responses from NRW when negotiating for rights to extract timber. A key barrier reported by one group is NRW’s policy that all woodland products are priced at the market rate, which the group cannot afford to do.
Community Groups interviewed experience of negotiating for rights to extract timber

“We are not allowed to treat the site as a resource for timber, despite wanting to. That is something that we intend to tackle when renewing our management agreement. We believe there is potential in providing a service for NRW in the more accessible and economic sites within the forest. We believe we can also increase local employment.” CyM

“The community would like timber to be extracted and sold with the income being returned to the woodland for further woodland management. NRW insist that all wood extracted must be bought at the market rate - the community cannot afford this.” CyM

“We had positive initial discussions about extracting firewood, thinnings. I think [the LAM] could tell we were interested in sustainable woodland management - our management plan outlined explicitly. However this did not get seen through to conclusion as conversation was stopped before this was discussed in detail.” CyG

“We have discussed feasibility of extracting for firewood, charcoal and small amounts of timber for carpentry, so hoping to do milling on site. There has been no indication of concerns from NRW to date.” CyC

“We are currently negotiating with NRW the possible use of some of the timber in a wood fuel community company. This is still in the early stages but looks promising.” CyC

Over half of the community groups interviewed do not extract timber, nor do they report an aspiration to do do so as part of their agreement with NRW. Five of these groups do, however, undertake small-scale use of materials from the woodland. This includes extracts of small amounts of wind-blown or deadwood for firewood, fence posts, making charcoal, materials for craft and educational activities (e.g. willow or coppice materials), and logs to create seating. None of the 5 groups reported any issues or problems around extracting small scale products.

The Introduction to WaY (2011) states regarding Use of Timber: requests to use small amounts of timber as part of your activities or project (for example woodland management training, making small items to sell) may be considered. All timber will be disposed of at market value.

Each request will be considered on a case by case basis within the following guidelines:
- A basic, prescriptive management plan will be agreed with District staff. These must:
  - contribute to delivery of the Forest Design Plan and ‘Woodlands for Wales’ objectives
  - specify the area to be worked: provide a precise description of the work to be undertaken
  - provide an estimate of the timber volumes extracted.
- FCW will monitor and record all harvested timber and will charge at the agreed rate.

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  - specify the area to be worked: provide a precise description of the work to be undertaken
  - provide an estimate of the timber volumes extracted.
- FCW will monitor and record all harvested timber and will charge at the agreed rate.
Community Group interviewed experience of extracting small scale materials
(the groups were asked if they had experienced any problems or issues)

- “No, no issues with NRW. The project has been focused on regeneration, rather than extracting – there is no interest from the group to do extraction. We do have an informal arrangement to extract small amounts of wind-blown or deadwood for firewood for the community woodland group – we always ask NRW first.” CyC

- “Aside from request to extract for fence posts as mentioned, which is still up in the air due to disease, no.” CyC

- “None, but we have not requested anything large scale. Smaller scale willow/logs etc for activities they are generous with. NRW get contractors in to do this.” CyC

- “We make charcoal (2 or 3 a year – enough to run our events – we do not sell) under the management agreement with NRW. We notify the LAM every time we do this. We are also exploring coppicing woodland to make reindeer for Christmas events – again to help keep our events sustainable. We are talking to the LAM about this currently. We pretty sure they will say yes, and come along to the event!” Llanymddyfri

- “No - the site is described on the lease as a Forest School for non-commercial use by the community. For safety reasons, a few trees need to be taken down most years and the timber is used on site for seating, firewood and as a wildlife habitat. As our lease specifies non-commercial use, the question of extraction has never been raised.” Llanymddyfri

- “No, there have been no issues regarding the extraction of materials. This is not part of what we want to do. NRW own the land and have quarried it a little for their own purposes, selling timber from this.” Llanymddyfri

During the interviews with Forest District staff, an example of a ‘no cost specification’ for extraction of coppice wood products was cited. Please see the case study below for more information.

Case study example – NRW no cost specification for firewood
‘Most of our sites are not for production forestry and many were under a coppice regime previously. One example is Parkwood on Gower – the coppice in there was set up as a no cost contract – so NRW get the site coppiced ie managed and improved and all the material is taken away as charcoal or firewood – because we get the work done there is no cost. The conservation officer has mapped areas that could be coppiced – I then put together a standard specification so that when we get community groups coming forward e.g. for bushcraft and yurt building – when they come along and say they want to do coppice then we already have the areas mapped out and the specifications that they can work too – we have the written specifications that they can work too – they can work the
areas and take the produce on a no cost specification. None have gone through the system yet – we want the woods managed under this regime and there are not small contractors who want to do it and the markets for firewood etc might not be there.’ CR Ardal y Glannau

A community group in North Wales that was re-negotiating its Management Agreement in autumn 2014 was keen to demonstrate (with support from the Welsh Government’s Nature Fund) the community benefits that can be gained from co-management with NRW under agreed management plans – particularly on ‘non cash crop (LISS)’ areas of the WGWE. This group believes that ‘there will be far greater benefits from what we are doing now than NRW could produce through commercial exploitation of cash-crop timber. There is a huge percentage of NRW land that is not designated as cash-crop and will never, as a result, be under management. Our project should show why these areas of forest should be opened up to communities and what the benefits are to communities, environment and economy for the long-term. It is public forest estate after all.’ (Golygfa Gwydyr).

Case Study – Golygfa Gwydyr re-negotiation of Management Agreement. Autumn 2014

Established as a company limited by guarantee in 2004 with an interest in using parts of the Forestry Commission Wales managed Gwydyr Forest for arts and theatre events, Golygfa Gwydyr has a community management agreement on a 15 hectare site linked to Llanrwst (and their community building) by Llwybr y Ceirw Sculpture trail and Forestry Commission Wales access routes. The site comprises a mile long labyrinth pathway, an outdoor performance space, an outdoor education space, a registered orchard, and is a facility which community members and visitors can freely access to walk the pathway and enjoy the forest environment.

Notes from talk by Roger Davies, Company Secretary of Golygfa Gwydyr

Golygfa Gwydyr (GG) is now in the process of negotiating a new Management Agreement with NRW through WaY. The new agreement will redefine the area of land to be managed by GG so that all the land under the agreement is land currently designated as Low Impact Silviculture System (LISS). This is land that will never be allocated to commercial felling and extraction and will not be allocate any funding for general management purposes.

The aim of the CMA is to demonstrate how communities can manage public land that would otherwise be unmanaged, and as a result, enable communities to benefit directly from land management. This will include use of timber for structures in the Caerdroia theatre, use of the land as a training resource, and some extraction for production of firewood. All income generated through this agreement will go to community projects run by GG and this, in turn, will reduce the community’s dependence on grant funding.

The local NRW staff are fully supportive as this enables more of the Gwydyr Forest to be under management without drawing directly on NRW resources. The site will continue to be managed as a LISS site but GG will introduce and encourage greater biodiversity of species and habitat. Public sector cuts in Wales – the terms of the agreement are changing this time (i.e. to enable the group to undertake woodland management activities and some extraction) – because of the cuts in Wales – NRW, Local Authorities etc are all wanting to make cuts which will mean that more land is taken out of management so will be of less benefit for future generations.

We have emphasized to NRW the benefits of our managing these 15 ha – we will get volunteers in and we will train people in rural skills here – we will put people in the forest who can go on and make a living from it – this will help Conwy meet its work/employment targets and tick boxes. We have made an application to the Welsh Government’s Nature Fund – if we are successful this will pay for the equipment we need to harvest products- the winches etc.
The key is to manage the forest site with NRW under agreed management plans – to work with them and manage the forest for both public and environmental benefit whilst keeping to the general principles in the Forest Design Plan.

We are not a threat to NRW, in fact we will be providing them with more resources to manage the forest in that way they would want to, should resources allow, whilst enabling community benefits to be delivered.

We would like to use this as an example (through the Nature Fund) for all Wales – a model that other community groups can use to develop their ideas and provide a basis for negotiations with NRW and other managers of public land.

When our capacity is built GG will become a community contractor so that the local NRW area office can contract with us directly for small, non-commercial management operations on other coups in the Gwydyr, ie clearing invasive species, windblown, pathways etc. This is a niche that no other contractor can fill – we are not undercutting any local contractors but building a relationship with NRW based on community benefit and not commercial gain.

Working an LISS site is an advantage for us in that it gives our group time to prove its management capabilities before it pitches for small contract work or even timber sales. I was surprised when I saw how much of the Gwydyr was designated LISS and I assume there are also significant areas across Wales which could provide an easy way in for CWGs.

It would be great if we could get to a position where CWGs could access cash crops but I do not see this happening in the near future. First we have to establish community benefit clauses within NRW contracting so we can level the playing field when pitching for timber.

I still think CWGs have a point to make to WG that goes along the lines – preferential access to cash crops results in more sustainable/resilient/etc communities (via successful CWGs) and reduced dependence on state aid/grants. It’s back to that old chestnut of valuing community benefits in a way that is comparable to economic value of timber so commissioning bodies can make decisions.
6. Discussion and Recommendations

6.1. Discussion Points

The WaY scheme is important – it is trying to enable ‘communities and social enterprises across Wales to gain the greatest possible benefit from the WGWE’ (FCW, 2011). Launched in 2011, WaY has now been operational for 3 years; this is an opportune time to reflect.

The aim of this study is to further our understanding of how WaY has worked to date with respect to community involvement in long-term projects on the WGWE. In particular to;

- ‘Unpick’ what is happening at the different levels of community involvement on the Estate
- Understand how communities can find out about WaY and gain access to the Estate
- Identify gaps or blockages that make it difficult for communities to make the most of WaY
- Work with all parties to understand the current situation and inform future development.

(a) Unpicking the different levels of community involvement on the WGWE

Communities want to make use of the Estate in many different ways. Many NRW managed woods provide excellent opportunities for recreation; community groups, families, and organisations can access these woods at any time without permission and do so.

Some community groups want to organise one-off or regular activities on the Estate. NRW does not systematically record the number of Permissions/Permits issued to community groups for activities and events on the WGWE. The NRW data does show that the greatest numbers of users and beneficiaries of the permissions system are currently the Ministry of Defence and fox hunting groups (often farming families in rural communities).

Some community groups want use the Estate for longer term projects; for recreation, conservation, health and well-being, heritage trails, charcoal making and bushcrafts, arts and education, for managing woodlands, for extracting forest products and for generating social benefits, including youth employment.

How many community projects have been approved by FCW/NRW since the start of WaY? NRW does not compile figures for uptake of WaY (for projects) by communities in Wales.

Among the Forest District staff interviewed for this study, 86.5% (13 staff) felt that community uptake of WaY has been ‘low’ or ‘disappointing’. The data held by NRW on WaY at the district level is patchy and incomplete. Llais y Goedwig cannot say with certainty how many communities have entered into Management Agreements or Leases with FCW/NRW for projects on the WGWE since 2011. Our ‘best guess’ estimate of community uptake of WaY is 13 management agreements and leases approved since the outset of WaY and 6 management agreements currently in negotiation.

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90 WaY online guidance describes a project as ‘longer term’ and ‘usually involving infrastructure installation, for example paths and trails, signage, sculptures, shelters or agreed woodland management activity.’
What is clear is that without changes to the WaY initiative, the level of community involvement in long term projects on the WGWE may not increase beyond a 'trickle' anytime soon.

(b) Process by which communities find out about WaY opportunities and gain access to the WGWE.

People find out about WaY by phoning the District Office to explain their idea for an event or activity or project and are then ‘pointed towards WaY on the NRW/FCW websites’. A helpful ‘Introduction’ to WaY is available on the website. A leaflet has also been produced.

The WG’s 2011 Position Paper on Community Involvement with Woodlands noted that: ‘many of the benefits which may be generated through community involvement in woodlands, may not be obvious to community groups. In order to encourage more groups to take an interest in woodlands these benefits need to be communicated and promoted. We will encourage this promotion amongst public sector service providers and also seek to work with the third sector and private sector to reach groups in urban and rural areas.’

Of the 13 community groups actively engaged on the Estate and interviewed by Llais y Goedwig for this study, 4 had not heard of Woodlands and You. In a parallel study of all 22 Local Authorities in Wales, Llais y Goedwig asked staff with responsibilities for woodland management if they had heard of WaY - 95% of respondents said ‘they had not heard of Woodlands and You.’

![Figure 16: % of Local Authority staff with responsibilities for woodlands aware of WaY in March 2014. n=22 (representing 1 staff in each of Wales’ 22 LAs).](image)

The opportunities and potential benefits of WaY are not measured or communicated or promoted by NRW (either internally or externally). It can be noted that WaY is not prescriptive (i.e NRW is not promoting specific WaY models) and this is a good thing.

A number of District staff noted that WaY is not promoted as NRW does not want to generate demand for WaY that it does not have the capacity to meet. The WG’s 2011 Position Paper on Community Involvement with Woodlands noted that: ‘skilled facilitators may be required to deliver higher levels of involvement. There needs to be adequate investment of time and skill in the process of engagement to build trust, analyse the key issues and negotiate suitable Agreements.’
One specific opportunity for communities to benefit from projects on the WGWE\(^{91}\) is actively promoted through WaY: **community food projects.**

Online guidance for ‘WaY Food Growing’ notes that ‘to ensure that community food proposals have the best chance of success and that specialist development support is available, NRW is working in partnership with the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG). The Federation’s Welsh Team can help with issues such as site assessment, group constitution options, planning and designing your project, and putting you in touch with other community gardens.’ \(^{92}\) This investment is possible through Big Lottery funding.

NRW provides scant information to local people about the resource it manages; it is rare to find any place based information beyond a simple signboard - the onus is on people to have an idea from somewhere and to pick up the phone. NRW’s pilot natural resource management integrated planning processes are an excellent opportunity to address this.

WaY is a process to grant and formalise access to the WGWE – a lot of work has gone into designing it, staff at the district level who process enquiries and applications are generally very helpful; they try and accommodate requests and to grant access to the Estate. Where problems with granting access have arisen they have often been at the Land Agent stage. It is a flexible scheme with many attributes.

WaY is as a process for granting access to carry out activities on the Estate. It is not a programme to maximise the potential for communities to benefit from involvement on the Estate. Community food growing is specifically promoted and supported (in partnership with FCFCG) other opportunities e.g, community based social enterprises or community managed woodlands are not. This may be due to the great demand for community gardens and the BIG Lottery investment.

© **Gaps or blockages that make it difficult for community to make the most of WaY opportunities.**

There are a number of situations in which communities (of interest or place) may struggle to make the most of potential opportunities on the WGWE, these occur when :

- A community group submits an application for a WaY project that is rejected
- A community group submits an application for a WaY project that progresses slowly
- A community group has an idea which does not progress from enquiry to application
- A community group enters into an Agreement but the project is not sustainable/fails
- Communities adjacent to the Estate show no interest in projects /no demand

\(^{91}\) Also the programme of Priority Woods and Community Rangers in south Wales.

Community group submits an application for a WaY project that is rejected. Although there are no available records on numbers of community groups that have applied for a ‘project’ and been turned down; from talking to District Staff this doesn’t appear to be a major problem.

Llais y Goedwig came across one example of a group that was turned down. The issue was brought to the attention of Barbara Anglezarke and the blockage has now been addressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps or blockages - community group applications turned down</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knighton case example</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> Land Agent blocked the application on the grounds of additionality. Although supported by the LAM, the Knighton Tree Allotments Trust application was refused on the grounds that the application did not bring additional benefit over and above what NRW could do. The group have since entered into two agreements with private woodland owners.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issue:</strong> The Land Agents’ interpretation of WaY and the Forestry Act was that WaY did not allow a community to manage a woodland –this was incorrect. WaY provides for management to be devolved under an agreed management plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issue:</strong> Inadequate systems in place to ensure (a) consistency of advice across WaY and (b) rejected applications are brought to the attention of the Forum</td>
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<td><strong>Issue:</strong> WaY is a process not a programme – no officer appointed to take full time responsibility for monitoring WaY, advising staff and ensuring systems are in place (devolved to WaY Forum.)</td>
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Community group submits an application for a WaY project that progresses slowly or is put on hold. Although there are no available records, there appear to be a number of blockages that can arise from time to time, some internal to NRW, others possibly beyond its control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps or blockages - applications progressed slowly or were put on hold</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> requirement to have a management plan –lack of support/funding for community based management planning on the NRW estate/issues with Glastir</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> inconsistent advice from NRW eg Tafy Tillery application stalled due to different advice from the Education Team and the Harvesting Team.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> administrative errors and system changes causing delays and additional work for some groups</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> NRW merger process caused advice and applications to be delayed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> no renewal process for existing groups, they must start the process from scratch</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> wind farm development application given priority</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blockage:</strong> market rates for disposal of forest products</td>
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Community group has an idea for a project that does not progress from enquiry to application. There are no available records, it is difficult to unpick this aspect; the LAMs report that while they never turn an application down, some initial enquiries don’t progress to applications.
Gaps or blockages - groups not progressing from enquiry to application

Blockage: paperwork – difficulties with filling out the forms (contested by NRW)
Blockage: health and safety requirements/insurance liabilities
Blockage: being constituted as a group
Issue: while it is vital that a community group is properly constituted and capable before entering into a Management Agreement, the support needed to build up capacity is often not available.

A community group enters into an agreement but the project fails. There are no available records. The only anecdotal evidence is of some former CydCoed projects which were less active once grant funding had finished.

Communities adjacent to the Estate show no interest in developing projects /no demand. The anecdotal evidence from the staff in some areas is that communities are not coming forward with ideas for projects. Further work is needed to ascertain if this is the case across Wales and if so why – this would help NRW determine where it is wisest to invest in WaY in future. Some blockages noted by LAMs are given below.

Gaps or blockages - groups not developing ideas/coming forward/lack of demand

Blockage: lack of accessible and suitable woodlands
Blockage: lack of promotion/basic knowledge of WaY – a clear offer – these are the benefits, these are the costs and this is the support...see priority woodlands
Blockage: lack of a clear and viable ‘offer’ on WaY – these are the benefits, these are the costs and this is the support
Blockage: lack of models and inspiration – beyond recreation which is well provided for by NRW – why take on additional responsibility?
Blockage: lack of tangible benefits: timber, fuelwood etc, jobs etc....
Blockage: high costs to community – management plans, volunteering etc
Blockage: lack of community woodland culture/knowledge
Blockage: clear fell system of forestry/focus on production

(d ) Work with all parties to understand the current situation and inform future development.

WaY is a fantastic initiative, FCW did extremely well to respond to the challenges facing community woodland groups in 2009; it developed WaY through Pathfinder projects, workshops and a great deal of effort internally to resolve legal issues and develop systems and resources. That seems to be as far as it goes.

A 2011 WG Position Paper also set out what needed to happen next – with respect to promotion and facilitation in particular and this has simply not been done. WaY appears to be standing still.
The Ministerial brief for Pathfinders in 2009 was to determine how to encourage ‘higher forms of community involvement’ in the management of the WGWE. A small number of really innovative forms of community involvement have emerged on the estate – including Golygfa Gwydyr and Wise Woods Wales. Opportunities such as the pilot natural resource management planning process and co-production and collaboration are also emerging and will be able to make harness WaY.

We don’t yet know to what extent ‘higher forms’ of community involvement on the estate will be attractive to wide numbers of people. We don’t yet know to what extent community projects can generate widespread benefits for local people (over and above their considerable costs to people).

But without some attention, the potential of WaY to maximise the benefits of the WGWE directly to local people, is not going to be realised except by communities of interest that already have a significant degree of passion for and knowledge of, woodlands. The risk is that WaY will drift into becoming primarily a permissions system.

More broadly, it is difficult to discern in the NRW Corporate Plan, beyond the P3 focus on ‘community involvement in place based decisions and community ownership’ the mechanisms by which the WfW policy commitments on community involvement are being carried forward. It is difficult to understand why the WfW indicators, including those on community groups, are not incorporated into the NRW corporate plan. It is difficult to understand why the 6 Policy Position Action Points are not embraced in the Corporate Plan. It is difficult to understand why there are no specific WaY work streams (i.e resource allocations) or indicators.

In short, it is difficult to understand from the Corporate Plan what NRW’s position on community involvement in the WGWE currently is.
6.2. Recommendations

Overall, Woodland and You is a scheme that achieves a great deal, and there is the potential for it to do more. There is no comparable process or ‘offer’ from any other major wood land owner in Wales. Llais y Goedwig would like to support it where possible. A series of recommendations on the future development of WaY are offered based on our findings.

Recommendation 1.

Re-visit the Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy (2009), the Policy Position (2011) and the WfW Indicators 2013-14 and clarify, in a written position paper on ‘community involvement in land managed by NRW,’ how NRW is responding to these policy commitments and outcome measures, and in particular the role of Woodlands and You projects in delivering these WG policy commitments (alongside NRM planning, urban woodlands, co-production, Good for People commitments etc).

Recommendation 2.

As part of the above, affirm NRW’s commitment to community involvement in the Estate and explain more clearly (internally and externally) the range of possibilities you would welcome on the Estate (without being prescriptive or exclusive).

The range could be from (a) communities doing nothing at all, to (b) occasional influencing (through planning & Friends groups for instance), to (c) volunteering, to arts and health and education events, to (d) small projects such as walks and trails to (e) ambitious ‘higher forms of involvement’ including devolved woodland management and social enterprises that use the local forests as assets to generate local benefits such as jobs for young people. Be clear whether the local or national interest takes precedence. Clarify the support available.

Recommendation 3.

Review Llais y Goedwig’s best guess of community uptake of WaY for projects on the Estate; 13 Agreements over 3 years. Look at the nature of the 13 agreements and what is being achieved. Is the figure accurate, is it acceptable? If NRW is disappointed with this level of uptake, please commit to giving WaY more of the attention and resources it needs (refer back to the WG 2011 Policy Position).

NRW is not disaggregating in its strategies and monitoring different forms of involvement on the Estate – do you just want people organising events and walks or volunteering or do you want communities looking at the asset and seeing the opportunities to do something more ambitious for their community – in partnership with NRW? If the later, how will you achieve it?

The NRM local area planning pilots will help NRW understand what communities want to do/what the potential is – in some areas families will just be happy to use the woods and take advantage of the recreational facilities on offer – in some areas they may want to do more. The figures for different forms of involvement need disaggregating and the constraints for each reviewing.

Recommendation 4.

Recognise that it is not always enough for NRW to sit back and invite people with ideas to come forward. NRW needs to take some responsibility for ensuring higher forms of community
involvement on the Estate are viable and have a fair chance of succeeding and inspiring others. The potential in some geographic locations may always be low (due to the nature of the resource and the local population). In other areas there may be great potential for ambitious partnerships.

When developing WaY in future, please consider it from a community’s point of view: what costs will they incur? How can they cover their costs? Why would they want to be involved? What capacity do they need? Can they use Glastir? Take some responsibility for ensuring higher forms of community involvement and social enterprise on the WGWE are viable and sustainable. Over time move away from a project focus to developing long term sustainable relationships on the WGWE.

Recommendation 5.

Encourage innovation in order to develop a greater range of community partnerships – Golygfa Gwydyr’s new agreement is an exciting development. Work with the Land Agents to relax some of the rules – commission new Pathfinder projects around social enterprises etc. Support NRW staff and encourage networking and partnerships with FCFCG, Coed Lleol, LlyG, ICF etc.

Recommendation 6.

Use new Pathfinders to measure the benefits generated and the costs incurred in higher forms of involvement - as above - it is not enough just to encourage people to come forward with ideas – more effort is needed to ensure ‘projects’ can be viable – to find innovative ways to maximise the benefits and to eliminate unnecessary costs/hindrances to communities and to determine the amount the WG needs to invest. WG needs to be able to compare costs and benefits of investing in local involvement versus traditional forestry models.

Recommendation 7.

Ensure NRW staff are clear about the forms of involvement NRW wants to encourage & have seen them in practice - including community gardens and community woodlands. Many District Staff have come from practical forestry backgrounds - which is invaluable. Visit examples of involvement and partnerships on Local Authority land in Wales, private land and in Scotland.

Recommendation 8.

Consider what needs to be in place to foster good long term relationships/partnerships – e.g. keeping the groups well informed, timely responses to enquiries, common aims, reasonable timescales, minimal unnecessary paperwork, staff on the ground, and consistent responses from different teams.

Recommendation 9.

Look for funds to invest in Woodlands and You to ensure it is properly resourced – consider partnerships which can bring in Lottery funding as with FCFCG. Consider ways to extend the food growing model and partnership with FCFCG to community woodlands and social enterprises.
Recommendation 10.

Review the status of WaY in NRW – is it at process, a scheme, a framework, a permissions system, a mechanism for granting access? Should the WaY projects/Agreements/Leases element be managed as a distinct programme and resourced accordingly?

Recommendation 11.

Review the compilation of data on Woodlands and You projects at a district and national level to ensure the system is fit for purpose. Currently it is extremely difficult to monitor and review WaY projects across Wales. Regard WaY projects as a programme not just a process and put in place a proper system to tell you if it is working – monitoring not quality of the process (Arad) but also delivery of outcomes. Disaggregate ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ forms of community involvement when reporting publically about WaY.

Recommendation 12.

Incorporate the WfW Outcome level Indicators for community involvement into NRW delivery. These are (1) Involvement in Woodlands Indicators: (a) Consultation in woodland plans (% adults), (b) Membership of woodland community groups (%adults), (c) Involvement in woodland education (% households), (d) Involvement in woodland volunteering (% adults). (2) Community Groups Indicators: (e) Number of active community woodland groups, (f) Area of land Leased or owned by Community Woodland Groups (ha). In particular there is no reason why data on (f) [expanded to include management agreements] is not being collated for the Estate through WaY records. The data on (f) in the current 2013-14 report (covering all woodlands in Wales) is out of date and of little value.

Recommendation 13.

Produce regular reports on WaY projects – in addition to a better monitoring system (above) please consider the system in Scotland where Forest Enterprise Scotland established a well-resourced independent advisory group to undertake a ‘Health Check’ study looking at what Forest Enterprise Scotland has achieved in its work with local communities over the past 10 years. Please review their recent report (August 2014).

Recommendation 14.

Broaden membership of the WaY Forum (possibly to include people outside of NRW) and produce regular reports based on proper data collection – be open and accountable outside of NRW (example of WfW Woodlands for Wales Indicators reporting).

Recommendation 15.

Ensure the Land Agents and other staff approach potential agreements from the point of view of maximising local benefits from the Estate and not just a nebulous ‘national interest.’ Require regular reports on the level of approvals of new agreements.
Recommendation 16.

Recognise the value of the community ranger role. More broadly work out what to do about the need for capacity building/holding hands etc- either more community rangers or peer to peer support or brokers or partnerships or networks/signposting etc. May be best approached as an across-the-board issue in Wales with LAs, Coed Cadw, regional support groups etc.

Recommendation 17.

Decide what to do about promoting Woodlands and You – as part of a concerted, well thought out approach to engaging with local people on an area basis (as in the NRM local area planning eg Tawe catchment pilot work).

Recommendation 18.

Review Forestry Commission Scotland’s online statements of support to communities, in particular their Community Fund initiative and consider instituting something similar – maybe work with Environment Wales on this?

‘The FCS Community Fund supports community groups and organisations that are encouraging and facilitating greater use of woods by people to derive health, well-being and community benefits.’

Recommendation 19.

Include WaY work streams in the NRW business plan and provide some local/district level funds for field staff to support it.

Recommendation 20.

Clearer statements on the NRW website on community and social enterprise involvement. Review the equivalent FCS webpages which state clearly how FCS works with communities (see link below).

Bibliography


WG. (2010). *Community Involvement in Welsh Woodlands & Trees*.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Typology of Community Involvement

Forest Research, the UK-wide research organization that provides the evidence base for UK forestry practices and supports forestry’s contribution to UK governmental policies, has created a toolkit for community engagement in forestry (Ambrose-Oji, 2011) and this gives a typology of community engagement:

- **Information**: give people basic information so that they can decide if they wish to be a consultee on, or a participant in, the forest or woodland planning or delivery process. Letting people know what is happening is a very legitimate role, particularly in situations where stakeholders will not be invited to take part in decision-making.

- **Consultation**: invite people to express their interests, concerns and ideas for the forest or woodland management plan, service and facilities, or other forestry-related decision.

- **Involvement**: encourage people to participate in generating options and potential solutions for forest management plans, projects or activities.

- **Partnership (Collaboration)**: people directly participate in selecting the best-fit solution that will become the forest or woodland management plan, or in choosing and designing the activities and services provided. Influence and responsibilities are negotiated and shared.

- **Empowerment (Control)**: this involves building the capacity of an individual or groups of people such as community groups, local authorities or private owners to manage woodland independently.
Appendix 2: Welsh Government Woodlands for Wales Indicators 2013-14 for Community Involvement

10. Community involvement

Key points

Latest data show a slight increase in the percentage of households involved in woodland education, and a sizeable increase in the area of land Leased or owned community groups.

There has been stability in the percentage of people consulted on woodland plans, involved in volunteering in woodlands, and members of community groups.

There was a slight decrease in the numbers of woodland community groups between 2008 and 2010.

Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Involvement in woodland Baseline (%)</th>
<th>Baseline Date</th>
<th>2013 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Consultation on woodland plans (% adults)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Membership of woodland community groups (% adults)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Involvement in woodland education (% households)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Involvement in volunteering in woodlands (% adults)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Community groups</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e) Number of active community woodland groups</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Area of land leased or owned by community woodland groups (Ha)</td>
<td>233 Ha</td>
<td>624 Ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevance

Two of the desired goals of the strategy are that more communities are involved in decision making about woodlands, and management of woodlands so that woodlands deliver greater benefits at a community level and that more people of all ages benefit from the use of woodland as a setting for learning and play. This indicator monitors the proportion of the population getting involved in woodlands.


Appendix 3: Legal framework 93

The powers and duties of both the WG Minister and NRW in relation to the ownership and management of woodlands are governed by the 1967 Forestry Act (as amended). In summary, Welsh Ministers hold the title to the Welsh Government woodland estate and NRW has the duty to manage it (passed on from the former Commissioners).

Whilst the outright disposal of woodlands through sale (but not the wholesale disposal of the NRW-managed estate) was authorised by the 1981 Forestry Act, it has long been considered that leasing of woodland under S39(3)(b) of the 1967 Act may be beyond the powers of the Minister because there is an intrinsic requirement in the Forestry Acts that woodland which is owned by Ministers should be managed by the Forestry Commissioners – now NRW in Wales. Counsel has previously advised that the Act requires ‘the management by the Commissioners [NRW] of forests acquired by the Minister which form a substantial part of the forestry resources of Great Britain’. The key test appears to be whether in granting a lease to a third party would breach the ministerial duty under S8A of the Forestry Act 1967 which states: ‘In performing their functions under this Act the Ministers shall have regard to the national interest in maintaining and expanding the forestry resources of Great Britain’.

Detailed legal advice was received from both the FC and the WG Solicitors in relation to Long Wood when this case was possibly proceeding via a lease. The following summary from an email from the FC Solicitor to the Assembly Government Legal Services Division dated 7 October 2009 states that ‘as an individual project, this lease probably does not fall outside the scope of the Act because by itself it would not amount to a wholesale disposition of forestry land. It is a question of degree’. This summary advice also indicates that it could be ‘inconsistent with the Act and, therefore, ultra vires, for this model to be rolled out more widely throughout Wales with the result that there is a significant reduction in the amount of forestry land placed at the disposal of the Commissioners’. The WG Legal Services Division were content with this advice.

Therefore the proposed lease of individual woodlands as one-off transactions, that did not result in a significant reduction in the amount of land placed at the disposal of the Commissioners, would be lawful. The crucial issue for the future is the definition of ‘significant reduction’.

Leases and Sales 94

As the law currently stands, the Welsh Government can sell and lease its woodlands as long as such disposals do not result in a significant reduction in the amount of land placed at the disposal of the Forestry Commissioners.

To protect the public interest in the long-term in relation to woodland sales, a restriction on the title will be registered with the Land Registry at the time of any sale. This will secure a right of first refusal to the WG, to purchase back the woodland if a group is dissolved and seeks to dispose of its assets.

As potential leasers and purchasers will require significant resources in order to carry out their plans (if the woodland value is greater than 200,000 Euros, European State Aid Rules require that disposals

93 Based on email correspondence with Barbara Anglezarke dated 22nd July 2014
94 Based on background paper to the Workshop on 17th May- Community Groups and Social Enterprises, Opportunities on the Assembly government Woodland estate
are at market value), additional public benefit safeguards are likely to come from the contract requirements of funding bodies. For example, the Big Lottery Community Asset Transfer programme requires grant recipients to deliver a 20 year programme as a condition of any award. During that period, groups are required to agree any changes in constitution or proposals for the asset with Lottery officials.
Appendix 4: Script and interview form for NRW staff

**NRW Local Area Managers:**
**Telephone Intro script –**
- Thank you for your time
- As outlined in the email from Barbara, this interview should take approx. 35 mins
- My name is Jane, I am a volunteer with LlyG - community woodland network for Wales
- We’re working w/t NRW on a small piece of research to better understand community uptake of WaY projects
- Our focus is on WaY projects rather than activities & events
- Why…whilst WaY permissions for activities & events are at the anticipated level, applications for ‘projects’ (including management agreements, lease, sales) are low
- Our overall aim is to increase the use of WaY for community projects (assuming the demand is there?).
- Our findings will form a discussion note, with recommendations (transcripts, feedback, anonymity).

**Admin Staff questions** – numbers of WaY project applications? Numbers of WaY leases and management agreements
NRW Staff Member Name:

Contact details:
District:
Relevant community woodland groups in area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe your role in NRW?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How does WaY relate to that role?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How much time do you spend on WaY? (rough % of working time....what is activities and what is projects)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If you were explaining WaY to local people in a nutshell, what would you say?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. WaY - How do people in your area find out about WaY?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How many WaY project enquiries have you had? (if few, why)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many WaY project applications have you had? (if few, why)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Are there any applications that you have had to turn down? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How do you see the WaY projects process working...if a group comes to you with an idea what are the next steps?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How many WaY project management agreements / leases / purchases with community groups are there in your area?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Where are these projects? – geographic area and forest type?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What is the nature of these community projects (what do they do?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. In general, what opportunities do WaY projects offer to community groups?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you collaborate with other organisations to deliver WaY (projects)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Are you familiar with ............... community woodland group (s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What is your relationship with this group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Have there been any successes / challenges with this particular relationship?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How do you see WaY relating to forest design plans and NRW forestry work programmes? Is the design plan a good way to tell people about WaY/involve people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How would you summarise community uptake of WaY (projects). What are the main reasons for the level of uptake?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Are there any recommendations (for NRW or LlyG) to improve community uptake of WaY?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Any other comments you would like to make?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Interview script for community projects involved in the WGWE

Intro script –

- As outlined in the introductory email, this short telephone interview of approx. 30 – 45 mins
- As you know, we are LlyG - the community woodland group network for Wales.
- Ensuring local community access for the use, management, and ownership of government estate woodlands is key to community woodland work in Wales.
- WaY is a process that has been developed by FCW/NRW to create opportunity for community use of Welsh woodland.
- We are collaborating with NRW on a small piece of research that aims to better understand how the WaY programme has worked to date, with the overall aim of increasing the use of WaY for more complex long-term projects.
- This overall aim comes from the observation that whilst permissions for events / activities are at the anticipated level, applications for longer term projects (including management agreements, lease, sales) are not currently being made.
- Our findings will form a discussion note, with recommendations moving forward
- We understand you work on NRW land and have .... agreement.
- Data protection, anonymity etc.....acknowledgements
- Discussion note – will be circulated, you will get feedback etc

Group name:
Woodland name:
District:
NRW Local Area Manager:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What are the main things your group does?     | Criteria from membership forms (tick):
|                                               | • woodland management for biodiversity & conservation
|                                               | • woodland management for timber
|                                               | • crafts and woodland products
|                                               | • courses or education
|                                               | • recreation & access
|                                               | • social activities and events
<p>|                                               | • other: |
| Have you used WaY? If so, for what type of project? |        |
| How did you find the process?                 |        |
| Do you still have ... agreement / lease / ownership? |    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did this agreement come about?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the process when making decisions about the woodland and its management? (How is NRW involved)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your relationship with your local area manager?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is working well with this relationship and what could be improved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With regards to the challenges what could help support you and your work / through this process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other comments?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 6: Community groups involved in the WGWE interviewed for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Group</th>
<th>Woodland</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Type of Woodland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cwmcelyn Tenants and Residents Association</td>
<td>Cwmcelyn Woodlands</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd - Resolven</td>
<td>Management Agreement</td>
<td>Estimated 7 hectares. 65% broad leaf, 35% larch. This will change soon - rest of larch will be clear felled and then planted in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society.</td>
<td>Two areas - The Darren &amp; Henllys</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd - Resolven</td>
<td>Informal Agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daerwynno Outdoor Centre</td>
<td>Llanwynno Woodlands or St Gwynno Forest</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd</td>
<td>Lease</td>
<td>2 hectares. 15% broad leaf, 85% Conifer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyfi Biosphere Community woodland group (working title until name is agreed late Nov 2013)</td>
<td>Ty Gwyn, plus other local woodlands in the Dyfi Valley.</td>
<td>Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td>Management Agreement – in negotiation</td>
<td>Size of Coed Ty Gwyn 28 hectares. 70% broad leaf 30% conifer. Size of trees: conifers 30% standards, broadleaf 40% regeneration with 30% standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golygfa Gwydyr</td>
<td>Gwydyr Forest</td>
<td>Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td>Management Agreement</td>
<td>A variety of different woodlands in the Gwydyr Forest, owned by different people. 30% broad leaf, 70% Conifer, 22 hectares. Forest specific to the NRW management plan – 10% broad leaf, 90% plantation pine, 15 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knighton Tree Allotments Trust</td>
<td>Radnor Forest</td>
<td>Coed y Gororau</td>
<td>Management Agreement – in negotiation / fallen through</td>
<td>2 areas - replanted with broadleaf. 1.86 hectares &amp; 0.1 hectares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalist Society Ltd</td>
<td>Penmoelallt Community Woodland</td>
<td>Llanymelwyfri - Llandovery</td>
<td>Management Agreement</td>
<td>Entire woodland 300 hectares – all conifer Management Agreement woodland area - 36 hectares – almost all broadleaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pobl y Fforest</td>
<td>No name commonly known as ‘Keepers’</td>
<td>Llandovery</td>
<td>Lease</td>
<td>A rough estimate of % broad leaf % conifer and size 90% conifer/10% broad leaf on 1 hectare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

95 These are the groups that Llais y Goedwig identified from its own membership, Cydcoed projects lists, Wavehill 2010 report and an internal Llais y Goedwig report ‘Supporting the establishment and development of Community Woodland Groups in Wales’ (2011) that detailed ‘emerging’ groups. NRW Forest District lists were not available at this point of the research; there are therefore community-based groups that have used WaY that were not contacted for interview.

96 This agreement was not recorded by the Forest Districts.

97 This agreement was not recorded by the Forest Districts.

98 This is private land that the group formed an agreement with after the arrangement with NRW failed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Area Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pontrhydfendigaid Community Woodland Association</td>
<td>Coed Dolgoed and Coed Cnwch</td>
<td>Llandovery</td>
<td>Management Agreement</td>
<td>15% Conifer/85% Broadleaf at present, but NRW will be felling Conifer this year, replanting with Broadleaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafy Tilleri Action for You Ltd</td>
<td>Two areas - Penrhiwgarreg and Six Bells</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd</td>
<td>Management Agreement – <em>in negotiation</em></td>
<td>Rough approximation - 1 sq mile each. 90% Conifer, the rest broadleaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talley Community Amenity Association</td>
<td>Talley Community Woodland</td>
<td>Llandovery</td>
<td>Purchased</td>
<td>40 hectares, majority conifer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Kids</td>
<td>Pen y Renglwy &amp; Cwmsaerbren Woodlands</td>
<td>Coed y Cymoedd - Resolven</td>
<td>Management Agreement – <em>in negotiation</em></td>
<td>Penyrenglyn woodland is all pine forest, mostly Larch. Cwmsaerbren is about 80% pine again lots of Larch with the other 20% split between birch, beach, alder, ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise Woods Wales, with support from Tir Coed</td>
<td>Coed Ty Llwyd</td>
<td>Coed y Mynydd</td>
<td>Management Agreement – <em>in negotiation</em></td>
<td>23 hectares, Approx 20% broadleaf 80% Conifer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*99 This agreement was not recorded by the Forest Districts.

100 There are approximately 258 hectares in a square mile.

101 This agreement was not recorded by the Forest Districts.
Appendix 7: NRW District Data on WaY management agreements and leases

Please contact NRW for this information (Llais y Goedwig has not included this appendix in the Public version of this report).
Appendix 8: NRW WaY Forum Terms of Reference

Purpose:

To oversee the Woodlands and You (WaY) framework and its potential extension across the NRW estate, including:

- supporting consistent decision making and approaches across Wales
- acting as a sounding board for difficult decisions
- offering support, facilitating discussion, sharing learning, and promoting best practice
- monitoring and evaluation

The Forum will:

- Ensure that WaY is contributing effectively to the requirements of NRW’s Corporate and Business Plan targets, its Remit Letter from the Welsh Government, and all other relevant Welsh Government strategic aims;
- Promote close working relationships across Directorates to optimise service delivery;
- Promote WaY within NRW and externally;
- Agree and review targets to accompany the service standards and performance measures for WaY (as set out in the overall monitoring guide);
- Scrutinise and analyse complex or challenging applications (including processes and procedures adopted to resolve or deal with such applications) to ensure national consistency and best practice;
- Review all proposals to refuse a proposal or formal application;
- Identify good practice to be shared with all staff involved in delivery;
- Share knowledge and experience of health and safety issues, good working practice and innovation;
- Advise and support the Estates Management Forum;
- Review data collected using the WaY monitoring and evaluation toolkit, ensuring that relevant data is fed through for Corporate performance reporting in a timely fashion;
- Contribute to reviews of and implementation of any resulting changes to WaY documentation and guidance;
- Facilitate training or discussion sessions at bi-annual WaY staff forums;
- Oversee the development of WaY to include NNRs and all NRW managed land (where appropriate);
- Promote close working relationships across directorates to optimise service delivery;

Membership

Forum members representing a range of Teams and Directorates are listed in Appendix 1. Additional specialist advisers will be invited to contribute or to join the group as appropriate. A Yammer topic group facilitates communication with a wider staff group.

Meeting Frequency

Forum meetings will be held quarterly. In addition, the Forum will organise, attend and facilitate at least two meetings each year with the wider operational delivery teams.