

What does community forestry mean in a devolved Great Britain?

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SUMMARY

Community forestry is evolving in Great Britain across a variety of social and environmental contexts. Following devolution, England, Scotland and Wales have separate forest strategies. In England ‘community forestry’ often refers to management of new and existing woodland in areas of urban regeneration for public benefit. Social activism and policy changes in Scotland have led to a twofold model of urban regeneration, and community ownership and enterprise in rural areas. In Wales community forestry has developed through efforts led by rural communities and project funding, with results now incorporated into a new forest strategy. After outlining the historical context of forestry in Great Britain the paper examines developments within each country, and compares them with aspects of community forestry identified globally. The paper highlights the fit of community forestry with wider policy goals including urban and rural regeneration, alleviating social deprivation, and partnership between government agencies, non-government organisations and communities. It indicates the diversity of tenure arrangements, motivations and project support for community forestry, and challenges including sustainability and wider networking and capacity building.

Que signifie une foresterie communautaire dans une Grande-Bretagne décentralisée?

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La foresterie communautaire connaît une évolution en Grande-Bretagne au travers d’une variété de contextes sociaux et environnementaux. A la suite de la décentralisation, l’Angleterre, l’Ecosse et le Pays de Galles ont adopté des stratégies forestières séparées. En Angleterre, le terme de «foresterie communautaire» se réfère souvent à la gestion d’une terre boisée nouvelle ou existante dans des zones de régénération urbaine pour le bénéfice du public. L’activisme social et les changements de politique en Ecosse ont conduit à un modèle à deux facettes: la régénération urbaine, et l’entreprise et la propriété communautaire dans les zones rurales. Les Gallois, eux, ont développé la foresterie communautaire à travers les efforts initiés par les communautés rurales et les projets subventionnés. Leurs résultats sont maintenant incorporés dans une nouvelle stratégie forestière. Après un exposé du contexte historique de la foresterie en Grande-Bretagne, cet article examine les développements dans chaque pays et les compare avec les aspects de la foresterie communautaire identifiés à l’échelle globale. Il souligne la manière dont la foresterie communautaire entre dans les normes des buts de politique plus larges, comme la régénération urbaine et rurale, le soulagement de la pauvreté sociale, et le travail d’équipe des agences gouvernementales avec les organisations non-gouvernementales et les communautés. Il indique la diversité des arrangements de bail, la motivation et les projets de soutien de la foresterie communautaire, et les défis, qui incluent la durabilité et la possibilité d’accroître les connections et la capacité.

¿Qué significa la gestión forestal comunitaria en una Gran Bretaña de autonomías regionales?

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En Gran Bretaña la gestión forestal comunitaria evoluciona dentro de una variedad de contextos sociales y ambientales. Como resultado del proceso de transferencia de competencias a los gobiernos regionales, Inglaterra, Escocia y Gales tienen estrategias forestales diferentes. En Inglaterra, el “manejo forestal comunitario” se refiere con frecuencia a la gestión de áreas forestales nuevas y existentes en zonas de rehabilitación urbana en beneficio público, mientras que el activismo social y los cambios políticos en Escocia han conducido a un modelo doble de rehabilitación urbana, y propiedad comunitaria e iniciativa privada en zonas rurales. En Gales la gestión forestal comunitaria se ha desarrollado a través de los esfuerzos de las comunidades rurales y la financiación de proyectos, y ahora los resultados han sido incorporados en una nueva estrategia forestal. Después de describir el contexto histórico de la silvicultura en Gran Bretaña, el estudio examina los desarrollos dentro de cada país y los compara con aspectos de gestión forestal identificados a nivel mundial. El estudio analiza la relación entre el manejo forestal comunitario y objetivos políticos más amplios, como la revitalización urbana y rural, la reducción de las privaciones sociales, y la cooperación entre agencias gubernamentales, ONGs y comunidades. Se destaca la diversidad de motivos, modelos de tenencia de la tierra, y formas de apoyar proyectos en la gestión forestal comunitaria, y describe los desafíos más importantes, incluyendo la sostenibilidad y la creación de redes de contacto y de capacitación.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is the development of community forestry over the last 20 years, in Great Britain. This evolution of forestry is taking place across a socially, ecologically and politically diverse nation. A recent review of community involvement in forestry across more than one hundred countries concluded that common factors affecting success include tenure, policy and institutional context, benefit distribution, learning processes, and sustainability. It emphasised however that success is rooted in models that make sense locally, so that there is an important relationship between context and outcome (Lawrence 2007). The great majority of published papers are from South Asia and contribute to a growing literature on community user groups and common property resources, and their potential contribution to poverty alleviation and social justice (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001, Gibson *et al.* 2000, Rao *et al.* 2005, Sunderlin 2006). There are examples however from many parts of the world, including Europe and North America. Whilst much community forestry in Europe is based on the maintenance or reassertion of historic rights (FAO 1997, Jeanrenaud 2001, Salka *et al.* 2006), there are many examples from North America of new community forestry models intended, like the developing country models, to address rural poverty or historic injustices (Baker and Kusel 2003, Stedman *et al.* 2005). The literature reviewed there, however, was almost silent on community forestry in England, Scotland and Wales. The involvement of communities in forest planning, management and use has in fact evolved significantly in these three countries over the last 20 years in ways that have something in common with global trends but also have some unique features related to the historical and current relationship between society and its forests in Great Britain.

In order to explore these developments, a seminar was held at the conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons in July 2008. The approach was exploratory, based on presentations from key people involved with programme development in the three countries. The aim was to identify key themes and differences related to the different environmental and policy contexts in each of the three countries. Based on the perspectives of the presenters, we focused on the role of policy and institutional support from forestry and other agencies. This paper summarises and reflects on that discussion, with the aim of paving the way to a more complete analysis of community forestry. The affiliation of each author is significant, as they provide first hand accounts of experiences in each country.¹

We begin by describing very briefly the specific context of forestry in Great Britain, in relation to land ownership and management, and recent associated policy developments that focus on increased public access to countryside. This introduction is then followed by three sections that focus on

developments in the three countries.

Forests and forestry in Great Britain

Great Britain consists of three historical nations, England, Scotland and Wales, each with their own ethnic, cultural and political characteristics. Together with Northern Ireland they form the nation state of the United Kingdom. For the purposes of forestry, the story unfolds within the context of Great Britain, since Northern Ireland has had its own institutional arrangements since 1922.

Like much of continental Europe, medieval forestry in Great Britain was characterised by royal hunting rights combined with villagers' usufruct rights to firewood, fruit and fungi. By the 18th and 19th centuries, private estate owners were adopting ideas of scientific forestry from continental Europe (Schama 1995, Tsouvalis 2000). By 1919 forest cover had fallen to 5%, and the Forestry Commission (FC) was established to create a strategic timber reserve. There followed decades of concerted efforts to acquire land and establish industrial plantations of fast growing mainly exotic conifers, until by the 1940s the FC was the largest landowner in the country, and by the 1970s managed 1.25 million ha of forest (or 6% of the total land area of Great Britain). Today, total forest cover is 8.5% in England, 17% in Scotland and 14% in Wales.

Cost effectiveness was a significant driver of early FC thinking, with a resulting focus on fast growing species managed to economic rather than biological maturity, monoculture, and restocking rather than regeneration. Significant shifts in policy have taken place in the 90 years of FC history: in the 1960s, ecological conservation and wildlife management became a significant priority; by the 1970s public reaction to the hard, unnatural lines of upland planting led to a focus on more socially acceptable landscaping; and in the late 1980s the idea of community forestry was introduced. By 2004, change in societal priorities led the 2003-4 FC Annual Report to conclude that the main case for government intervention in forestry is to deliver public goods such as recreation, urban regeneration and biodiversity (Nail 2008).

Across Great Britain, 35% of woodland is owned or managed by the FC, and 44% by private landowners including private commercial timber companies; large rural estates (where management objectives may include game and landscape); and farmers with small areas of woodland (Forestry Commission 2003). Other non-government owners include conservation organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust which focus on building up a land base for habitat conservation. Compared with many other countries, only a tiny fraction of Great Britain's forest is owned or managed by communities (Forestry Commission 2003).

The balance of different forms of land tenure is very

¹ Forest Research is the research agency of the Forestry Commission (FC). The English case study is written by the Director of one of the Community Forests; the Scottish case study by the Community Development Policy Advisor in FC Scotland; the Welsh case study by a former social researcher in Forest Research and the former Programme Manager of Cydcoed, both now programme advisors in FC Wales.

different in each country, based on the historical course through feudalism and capitalism, and on the relatively higher importance of the rural economy in Scotland and Wales (Brown 2008, Stockdale *et al.* 1996). In all three countries the word 'commons' usually refers to land owned by a single landowner, but accessed and used by a larger user group of commoners who have legally defined and inheritable rights (Short 2000). These are mainly grazing rights although in the old royal forests, such as the New Forest, the commoners' rights also include 'estovers' – collection of dead wood (Short and Winter 1999). In Scotland they often relate to a particular tenure system known as crofting (Brown 2008), but historical research also reveals older, often place-specific rights to use (Callander 2000).

On top of these historical aspects, community forestry is influenced by the politics of the last decade. When the Labour government came to power in 1997, the two smaller countries of Great Britain were offered the opportunity to vote for devolved government – the culmination of centuries of debate, aspiration and contested national identity. Forest policy and management was devolved to the new national administrations, and national forest strategies were prepared for each of England, Scotland and Wales (Forestry Commission 1998, National Assembly for Wales 2001, Scottish Government 2002)¹. In 2002, the regulatory and operational functions of FC were divided into FC Scotland, FC England and FC Wales, with some central functions retained by FC Great Britain.

Because the concept of community forestry has as much to do with recreation as with livelihoods, the evolution of access policy is also relevant. Scotland has always had a distinct legal system from that of England and Wales, including different rights of access, inheritance and use of land. Designed to address longstanding ambiguities and grievances, the Land Reform Act (2003) establishes a statutory right of access to most land in Scotland, and a community right to buy land which comes up for sale. In England and Wales, legislation in the 1990s also brought new standards and rights of access for the public, particularly the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000).

So the recent history of British forestry presents us with the opportunity to compare three closely related but distinct contexts, and their roles in shaping current ideas, practice and organisation of community forestry. This paper examines the current situation in each country, before analysing the cross-cutting themes. Space limits the detail that can be provided here, and our aim is simply to establish a starting point, to draw the attention of the 'community forestry' community to the range of emerging experiences in Great Britain, and to invite more in-depth examination of the relationship between context and result.

ENGLAND

Meanings and origins

The English Community Forest Programme emerged from a growing urban forestry movement in the late 1980s, and from the desire of government agencies to create urban fringe forests for recreation (Johnston 1999). The programme began with three Community Forests in 1989, followed by nine further forests launched in 1991 (figure 1), of which a total of 10 survive. They are large peri-urban areas intended to form multi-purpose forests consisting of a network of community woodlands and other landscape features rather than continuous tree planting (Bishop 1992). In the wake of recession, a primary aim was landscaping aimed at renewing

FIGURE 1 *Location of the Community Forests in England*



degraded urban fringe areas and promoting access by urban people to local greenspace. While the FC was a partner, it is significant that the initiative was led by the government agency responsible for countryside access and landscape, the then Countryside Commission (CC).

² Revised strategies have since been published for England and Scotland: DEFRA. 2007. England Trees Woods and Forests Available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/forestry/strategy.htm>. Scottish Government. 2007. Scottish Forestry Strategy. Available at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infid-6aggzw>

The focus in this section is on the Community Forests, because that is the initiative which is most closely linked with policy through partnerships with state agencies. Many are members of the Community Woodland Network facilitated by the Woodland Trust (Woodland Trust 2009), and the Woodland Initiative Network (Natural England 2009) created by the Countryside Agency and now hosted by Natural England³. The websites of these networks show a wide variety of other community woodland initiatives on land owned by local authorities or privately, where a community group has established a management agreement, or purchased by community groups themselves. These groups are not analysed here but form an important focus for future research.

Social context

The Community Forests were originally selected from submissions made to the CC following a call for partnerships to be created to develop ideas and proposals for a Community Forest in their area. The 12 forests shared four objectives:

- economic regeneration (improving image of areas);
- economic development (employment and rural diversification);
- social welfare (through education, health and recreation opportunities); and
- environmental improvements (remediation of derelict land, creating new habitat, tackling climate change).

How these objectives were prioritised and implemented however, varies according to location, socio-economic conditions and landscape/environmental issues. A wider goal, that the proponents of the Community Forests can engage with is to 'create Community Forests that are cherished by local communities'. The need for this is illustrated by a participant in a planning day for new community woodland. The facilitator asked everyone to close their eyes and to think of when they last walked in a woodland, what they heard, smelled, felt underfoot. 'I've never been in a woodland' was one response. Whilst that is not typical, it does indicate the scale of the challenge in creating a new landscape for and with the community that will be valued as part of their neighbourhood.

Policy drivers

The Community Forest programme was a visionary idea, to bring forestry 'down the hill' from the rural upland plantations that the FC had focused on, and to use it as a mechanism to create new landscapes in areas that were under pressure from development, or that had suffered economic and social hardship and had large areas of derelict

and underutilised land. The idea of the Community Forests grew out of the growing focus on urban forestry in the 1980s, and the name 'Community Forests' was chosen as a title that satisfied various agencies who had found the earlier suggestion of 'Urban Forests' or 'City Forests' unpalatable (Johnston 1999). In one analysis, this allows a convenient side-stepping of traditional rural-urban divides in natural resource policy, by focusing on the public benefit rather than on the location of the woodlands (Nail 2008).

The FC's initial reticence about Community Forests had disappeared by the launch of the 1999 England Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission 1998), and the latest strategy (DEFRA 2007) maintains the focus on delivering public benefit, and seems to support all the objectives of the Community Forests.

In the 20 years since the launch of the Community Forests, new policy drivers have emerged which support them including social inclusion (or environmental justice), climate change and a focus on 'green infrastructure' formalised through the spatial planning process (Stubbs 2008). A significant component of policy under the Labour government has been decentralisation of spatial and economic planning to the regional level. As a result, the Community Forests are increasingly seen as regional and sub-regional delivery mechanisms and are not so explicitly supported by the new forest strategy.

Models

Four key aspects which distinguish the Community Forests from earlier urban forestry initiatives are:

1. Each Forest consisted of a local authority-led partnership with support from the CC and FC. The Forest partnerships were not legal entities;
2. The Partnership put in place 'core teams' (known as Forest Teams) to coordinate and enable activity;
3. The first task of the teams was to develop a long term Forest Plan (30-40 years) that set the broad strategy to deliver the objectives in each Community Forest;
4. The team was also tasked with developing the partnership, to extend the interest and involvement to other groups and organisations.

The Forest plans were developed with extensive public consultation and guidance from CC, and backed up by Landscape Character Assessments⁴; these were some of the first large scale assessments to find their way into a strategic plan. Each Forest Plan was subject to government cost-benefit analysis and had to have approval from the then Department of the Environment, before officially starting delivery. Initial investment by the CC provided support for the Forest Teams to enable them to focus on the delivery of the Forest Plans

³ NE is the government agency responsible for the natural environment

⁴ Landscape Character Assessment is an approach that has been adopted by local authorities to 'serve as a framework for decision-making that respects local distinctiveness. It is a way of 'unpacking' the landscape and understanding how its distinctive elements contribute to sense of place. As such, LCA is a useful tool for engaging stakeholders in sustainable development.' LCN. 2009. Landscape character assessment. Available: <http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/lca>

rather than on finding funds to support team posts. This is a factor that has changed over time as central funding has reduced and more effort is directed to obtaining specific project-based funds to support the teams (figure 5). Despite its scepticism, the FC provided support through dedicated Woodland Officers, and created the Community Woodland supplement to the national Woodland Grant Scheme, available only in Community Forests (Bateman *et al.* 1996).

The role of the Forest Teams is to act as catalysts. The Forest Plans are not themselves statutory documents. Using pump-priming funds from the CC, along with FC Woodland Grant Schemes (in their various iterations) the Forest Team role was and to a large extent remains one of coordinating, promoting and enabling activity, negotiating with land owners and new funders, promoting the Forest Partnerships as delivery mechanisms for the objectives set out in the Forest Plans, and embedding the Plans into Local Planning documents, economic strategies, and community plans, local and regional planning and other statutory documents.

In working with landowners, the Forest Teams assess objectives to ensure that trees, woodland or other habitats are a viable part of the business for the landowner, maximise the funds that can support the project, put the landowner in contact with potential contractors and, once everything is in place, to step away and allow the project to run. However, the long term nature of the Forest Plans means that the Forest Teams can step back in to assist a project that is struggling or where there are new opportunities.

It is only by taking this catalytic role that the Forest Teams can be seen to support the wider partnership, and support a wide range of projects. Becoming delivery bodies would put them in direct competition with potential partners and limit the number of projects that they can be involved in.

A wide range of delivery mechanisms has been tested and used in the Community Forests. One of the most successful has been the use of European Funding through programmes such as European Union Development Funds, European Structural Funds and others. Whilst this type of funding is onerous in terms of administration, it does provide significant amounts of funding over extended periods of time. This funding has often been used to tackle derelict and neglected land, pioneered by John Handley and Tony Bradshaw on Merseyside. Further work on creating community woodland on closed landfill by Forest Research was taken up by the Community Forests and led to the successful collaborations with Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores Universities that has led to extensive research and the creation of new community woodland on large areas of derelict land and old, closed landfill sites.

Outcomes

Individual Community Forests have data to show increase in planting both in terms of new planting and existing woodland brought into management (figures 2 and 3). There

FIGURE 2 Area (hectares) of new planting across all Community Forests, England

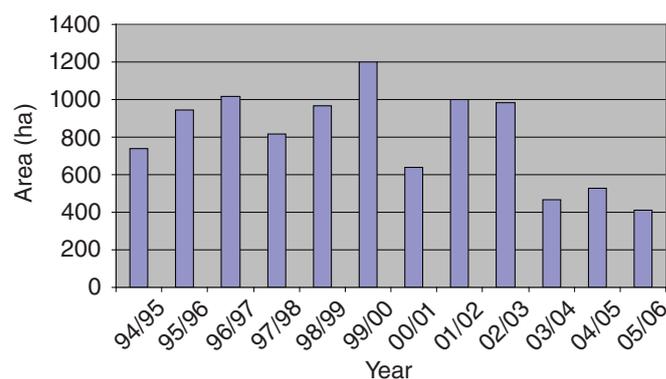
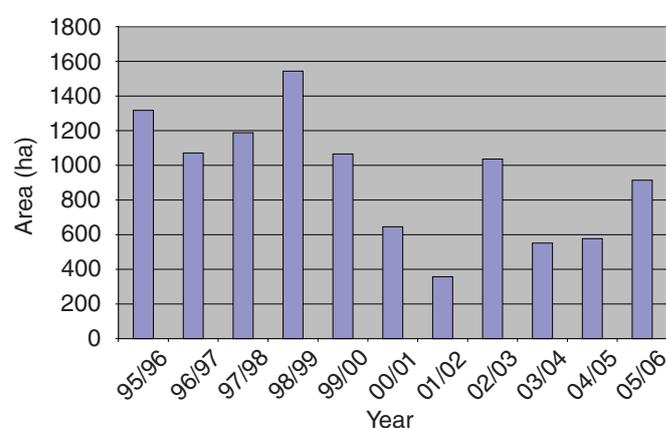


FIGURE 3 Area (hectares) of woodland newly brought into management in Community Forests, England



has been, however, surprisingly limited formal evaluation or academic study of the outcomes or effects of these tangible achievements. An economic approach to valuing the benefits of two urban fringe woodlands (falling within areas of the Community Forests) was published in 1992. The finding that the recreation value exceeds management costs by a factor of three is useful but necessarily preliminary and site-specific (Bishop 1992).

Programme evaluation was carried out in 2005, when the Countryside Agency (formerly the CC) concluded its financial support for the Forests, which stated:

The evaluation highlights the very significant impact of the Community Forest Programme on a wide range of Government PSA⁵ and regional targets, including those related to environmental, social and economic issues. Whilst not always measurable in precise terms, the scale and scope of these impacts, together with the extent of financial leverage achieved by the CFP, is testimony to its value. (SQW and LUC 2005)

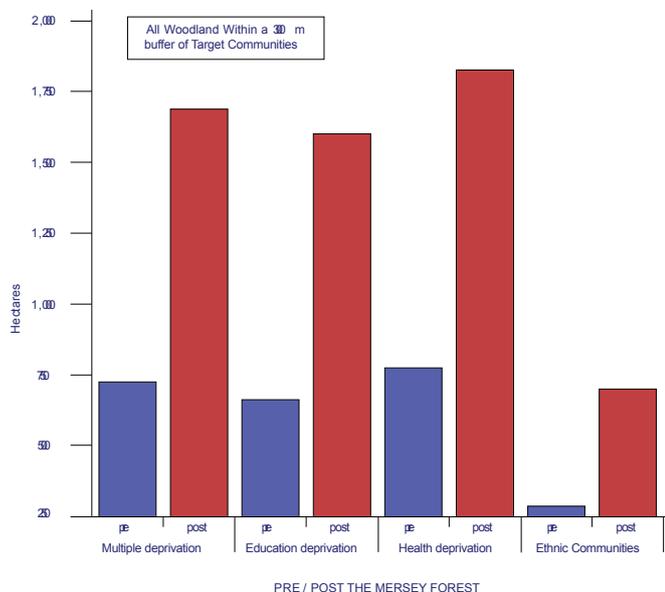
However, it also noted lack of clarity around leadership; and a need for improved monitoring of the collective impacts and outcomes from the Community Forest Programme at

⁵ PSA: public service agreements

national level, which has focussed on quantitative targets such as area of new woodland planted, access created, community events and funding gained for Forest projects.

Individual Community Forests have conducted more detailed monitoring reflecting local circumstances. For example recent work in the north-west shows a correlation between deprived communities and poor quality environment (TEP and Forestry Commission 2008). An independent comparator study (TEP 2006) showed significant increase of new planting in areas of deprivation within The Mersey Forest (figure 4). In addition, the Mersey Forest Awareness Survey (Vision 21 2007) indicated that communities are noticing the changes to their environment with the survey reporting that 62% of people surveyed said their environment had improved in the last 10 years, and over 90% said that they supported having a Community Forest in their area.

FIGURE 4 comparison of area of woodland 300m from population, before Mersey Forest (1991) and in 2006, for four target deprived populations (England)



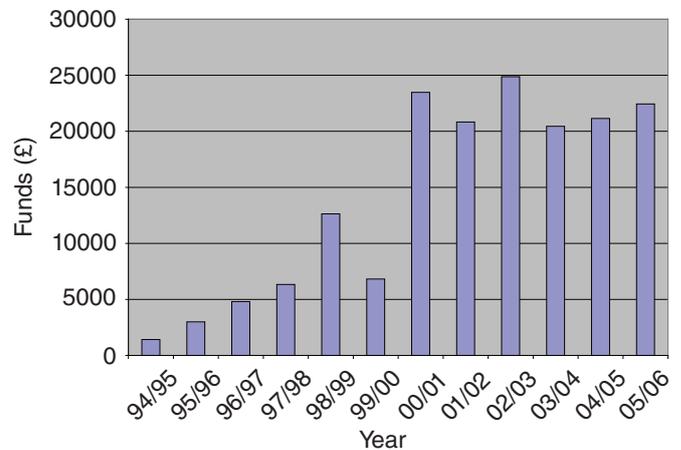
Source: Mersey Forest Comparator Study (TEP 2006)

Change and challenges

In the first twelve years of the Community Forest programme, national support was provided to help fund the Forest Teams in each Community Forest. This is no longer available and the teams are now funded through a mix of local government support and project derived funding (figure 5). Some of this funding, such as that provided through European Union Objective 1 and 2 programmes targeted at areas of poor economic performance, can be significant.

The development of these projects takes up to three years. In the past this risk was borne by the Forest Teams on behalf of the Partnership, and led to significant project funding for the Community Forests, specifically around £10m of EU funding. Today there are several Community Forests that have the resources to support such work on a speculative bid. Despite the proven track record and resonance with current

FIGURE 5 Funding brought into the English Community Forest programme from sources other than the Forestry Commission / Countryside Agency. The increase around 2000 indicates the decline in national funding and the search for other funds from regional government and other national sources.



issues, the reliance on project based funding reduces the stability of the Community Forests. Two of the original 12 no longer operate and all the Forests from time to time will face difficult situations financially, as many organisations do.

The Forests are valued by local people (Vision 21 2007) and deliver against key policies and strategies (SQW and LUC 2005). They have developed new models of working and have by and large stuck to the principle of partnership working, enabling many organisations to share the opportunities. The challenge is to continue communicating that they are a long-term strategy, with benefits gained by sustained change and trust with communities, not from intermittent interventions.

Most Forests are reaching the halfway mark in their strategic plans. At a national level the Forests work together and have a joint business plan focussed on four key areas:

- maintaining a national presence
- sharing experience
- influencing and promoting
- monitoring and evaluating.

Whilst there is no national lead for the Community Forests, the Forests try to maintain their national influencing role with Natural England, FC and other government departments such as the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Forests are supported by the Woodland Initiatives Network coordinator and increasingly work with other organisations involved in community forestry across England.

SCOTLAND

Meanings and origins

Community forestry in Scotland is defined by community ownership of woodlands, or community control over

woodland decision-making (Edwards *et al.* 2008). A report by Reforesting Scotland (2003) defined community woodland groups as geographically defined, having a significant proportion of the local population as members. Working with a clear definition like this enables at least an approximate census of community woodlands. There are currently 138 active community woodland groups with a membership of around 13 500, an increase of 34% since 2002. The groups currently manage around 245 woods equating to 18 275 hectares or 1.4% of the total woodland area of Scotland (Edwards *et al.* 2008).

This concentration on communities of place predominates in rural Scotland. The majority of successful groups are in the Highland area of the country (see for example Matheson 2000), although there are many examples of thriving groups elsewhere in Scotland. Other forms of community engagement in forestry involve woodland owners, managers and users as consultees and in a wide range of different partnership arrangements with each other and with FC Scotland (FCS). In 2005, 110 partnership projects were active on the national forest estate⁶ (Forestry Commission Scotland 2005b).

Another community woodland approach was introduced in the 1980s in urban areas. The focus was on the rehabilitation of post-industrial landscapes by establishing new community woodland. Urban local authorities championed the approach which was predominately agency-led. Examples of this include the Clyde Valley Community Woodland and the Central Scotland Forest (CSF). The CSF was championed and developed by the Central Scotland Forest Trust (formerly Central Scotland Countryside Trust) funded by the (pre-devolution) Scottish Office of the UK Government, and supported by forestry grant-aid from FCS. The trust was established to create and promote the idea of a Central Scotland Forest improving the physical landscape of the former coal mining area between the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. To date, CSFT has planted 5 500 ha of woodland and treated almost 1 100 ha of vacant and derelict land (Central Scotland Forest Trust 2007). People living within the forest area believe it has a positive impact on the quality of life of themselves and families (Social Regeneration Consultants 2006).

An early example of community-owned woodland was established at Wooplaw in the Scottish Borders in 1987, with the aim of managing and maintaining a woodland for the community, by the community (Reforesting Scotland 2003). Building on the experiences at Wooplaw, Reforesting Scotland⁷ was established to facilitate and support community-owned woodland in Scotland. This has been taken a stage further with the establishment of the Community Woodland Association in 2002, which aims to promote, co-ordinate and develop the sector further.

Commentators have identified the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development as the key moment in formally raising the profile of social forestry as part of a

coherent framework for sustainable forest management (Hodge and Maxwell 2005, Reforesting Scotland 2003). Academic studies showed that communities were interested primarily in economic development and the sustainability of their communities. Jobs were particularly important. They wanted local assets to generate local benefits. They did not generally aspire to ownership unless they felt that the forests were not delivering to their potential (Slee and Snowdon 1999). Concurrently, the value of involving communities in the governance of Scotland's state forests had started to be formally recognised and with wider developments in political devolution and land reform, a clear commitment for greater partnership working between FCS and communities was made (Hodge and Maxwell 2005). An example of this new relationship was when the FC entered into a joint management agreement over Strathmashie Forest with the Laggan Forest Trust to support local employment and economic development (Tylden-Wright 2000a).

Political drivers

Wider political drivers in the 1990s had a significant impact on the community woodland sector and provided a boost to asset-based community development across Scotland. The main driver was Scottish devolution and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. Since devolution, there has been an increasing responsiveness of public agencies to communities resulting in the establishment of Community Planning Partnerships (Hodge and Maxwell 2005). The devolved administration introduced other initiatives that changed the historic relationship between local people and landowners and managers; the most significant being the Land Reform (Scotland) Act (2003). This not only codified a general right of responsible access to land in Scotland but more significantly introduced the 'Community Right to Buy', which enabled constituted community groups to register an interest to buy land if the existing owner decided to sell. This process gives groups an opportunity to purchase land before it is put on the open market. As a key player in one of the earliest community buy-outs described it, the process represents a:

"... 'push down' of power through the process of devolution and decentralisation and the 'pull down' of power through action on the ground..."

(Bill Ritchie, Treasurer of the Assynt Crofters Trust at the time of the community buy-out of the North Assynt Estate in 1993).

One of the strategic directions of the Scottish Government's first Scottish Forestry Strategy (Scottish Government 2002) was 'helping communities benefit from woods and forests'. Priorities that followed from this included increased provision of opportunities for community involvement in forestry, and support for community ownership where it brings local

⁶ The national forest estate refers to land owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland.

⁷ Reforesting Scotland, established in the early 1990s, is an Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation supporting community woodlands with information, advice and training see: <http://www.reforestingscotland.org/>

benefits. In 2000, FCS established a Forests for People Panel to advise on community involvement in forestry. The new Strategy and Panel led to the introduction of new forestry policies including:

- Working in Partnership: our commitment (Forestry Commission Scotland 2005b), which states principles for engaging local people in woodlands;
- National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) to provide a mechanism for community organisations to apply to purchase any part of the public forest estate, even if the land is not on the market. The process requires the community organisation to demonstrate that purchase would be in the public interest (Forestry Commission Scotland 2005a), and has evolved and expanded following feedback from early beneficiaries. To date, 877 ha have been transferred under this scheme.

The developments driven by the Land Reform Act have largely benefited rural communities in rural Scotland because they are restricted to areas with communities of fewer than 10 000 people. In urban communities, the social inclusion agenda and the concept of 'environmental justice' have had more impact promoted by the Government during the second Parliamentary term (2003-2007) (Scandrett 2007). The majority of Scotland's most deprived communities (as measured by low incomes, poor health and low educational attainment) live within urban and poor quality environments (Fairburn *et al.* 2005). Government agencies, with responsibility for environmental enhancement and protection are now implementing the Government's environmental justice policy and promoting the need to improve the quality of greenspace and woodland to help support an improvement in the quality of life of local communities. The response by FCS was to develop the Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) policy and programme to provide a focus for its work on improving quality of life in towns and cities. This programme was launched in 2005 and provides funding to manage existing woodland, create new woodland and work with local people to help them benefit and enjoy their local woodlands. Some 68% of the Scottish population live within the "WIAT area" (within 1km of settlements with a population of 2000 people or more). Table 1 provides information on progress with the WIAT programme indicators.

Models

This broadening of the social forestry agenda into more

urban areas, focusing on improving the health and well-being of people living and working there, has challenged the applicability of a one-size-fits-all 'Scottish Community Woodland' model. The difference between community forestry in rural and urban Scotland is related to people's motivations to get involved in forestry and the contribution of local forests to local livelihoods. Two case studies illustrate this (box 1) and can be summarised as the 'Highland model' and the 'Lowland model'. Abriachan is typical of the Highland model, which we might characterise as rural, community-owned, driven by land reform and linked to livelihoods. Drumchapel is typical of the Lowland model, which we might characterise as urban and peri-urban, in partnership with user groups and volunteers, owned by the public sector, and driven by social inclusion and accessibility agendas.

Whilst this dichotomy is simplistic, it serves to illustrate the fact that community forestry provides a range of opportunities and outcomes in very different circumstances across Scotland. In reality, a range of different approaches are in operation defined more by the agreed outcomes of a project than their geographical location (Forestry Commission Scotland 2005b). The increasing level of partnership working within the community woodland sector has supported the development of these different approaches. These new partnerships are providing new linkages between community groups and a range of delivery partners not traditionally involved in forestry, such as council youth and social services, development trusts, and housing associations. For example the interaction with health care and education providers is also helping to deliver social benefits to a wider population (Edwards *et al.* 2008).

Outcomes

Community forests provide a similar range of economic and social benefits to those delivered by forestry elsewhere in Scotland. These benefits include opportunities for employment, volunteering, recreation, learning, activities promoting physical and mental health and well-being, and landscape improvements. However, the review of individual and community-level benefits in the two case study areas (box 1) highlighted community capacity building as the key outcome of people's involvement in forestry (Edwards *et al.* 2008). This was supported by results from the 2006 Forest 4 People Omnibus survey, with 65% of respondents agreeing that woodlands are good places to meet with friends and family (Edwards *et al.* 2008).

Community forestry in Scotland has evolved as a result

TABLE 1 WIAT Progress indicators 2004/05 – 2005/06 (Forestry Commission Scotland 2006)

WIAT progress indicators	Total 2004/05 & 2005/06
Urban woodland brought into active management	5 172ha
Urban woodland created	604ha
Woodland creation in areas of high deprivation	55ha
Participants in 'active woods' events in the WIAT area	7 340
Partner groups/organisations involved with FCS WIAT activities	179
Population within 500m of 2ha of accessible woodland	15%

BOX 1 Case studies illustrating two models of community forestry in Scotland (from Edwards *et al.* 2008)**1. The Abriachan Forest Trust, near Loch Ness**

'Land is power and when you have the power, you have the capacity to do things'
(Abriachan Forest Trust member, 2007)

The Trust was created as a vehicle for bringing into community ownership 534 hectares of planted forest and open hill. Today Abriachan Forest is one of the largest community-owned forests in Scotland, and consists of a mixture of planted commercial forest, some remnants of old pines and a substantial area of naturally regenerating open hill. The aims of the Trust are to:

- ensure continued public access to a large and varied stretch of wild countryside for amenity purposes
- ensure that the unique scenic and environmental value of the area is both respected and enhanced
- act as a catalyst for a whole range of community activities and local job creation.

2. Drumchapel, Glasgow

'I feel like I am making the environment better for everyone'
(Drumchapel Greenwork mates volunteer, 2007)

The Bluebell Woods around Drumchapel in Glasgow are owned by Glasgow City Council and managed in partnership with FCS. Drumchapel is a deprived urban area with significant social challenges. A community and environment ranger started working in the Drumchapel woodlands at the end of 2006 and is encouraging the community to use the woodlands and help improve the woodland environment. A number of initiatives in partnership with other agencies, Glasgow City Council, Drumchapel Life and Kelvin Clyde Greenspace, have started. These include: volunteering for long-term unemployed and young people; a health walking group, woodland classes for the local primary school; and promotional events with a group of people living with disabilities. The woods are better managed and better used.

of a number of influences from within the forestry sector (Sustainable Forest Management Principles) and from the impact of wider political devolution and land reform. Literature from the communities that now own forest, or manage it in partnership with the FC, indicated early dissatisfaction with FC (Callander 2000, Matheson 2000). However, the development of forestry policy and practice in Scotland in response to the wider political and societal changes has played a significant role in helping address some of these perceptions and support the continued development of community forestry (Hodge and Maxwell 2005). In 2006, a review of experience of community woodland groups involved in partnerships with FCS indicated that both group members and FCS staff believed partnerships were adding value, delivering community empowerment and improving access to local amenities (Campbell and Bryan 2006).

Change and challenges

From the policy perspective, community forestry in Scotland is in an exciting phase of its evolution. The principles and practice of engaging people in forestry are becoming the norm in policy. One principle of the current (2006) Scottish Forestry Strategy is "forestry for and with people" (Scottish Government 2007). A momentum has been created behind the sector that continues to develop innovative approaches to engage people from both rural and urban communities. However, the challenge of resourcing and supporting this increased activity sustainably across the whole of Scotland will require the further development of a new set of relationships between organisations and communities. Edwards *et al.* (2008)

concluded that these new partnerships are vital in supporting the delivery of community capacity building.

FCS and the Community Woodland Association (CWA) are working collaboratively to identify the type and range of support available to the sector (Forestry Commission Scotland 2008). This work will attempt to map the potential partners and initiatives that individual groups can link into when developing specific projects. CWA continues to develop its capacity to act as a hub for information, advice and networking for the sector, ensuring the lessons and experience from the recent period of growth can be shared by others (Community Woodland Association 2008).

The rural model of community forestry in Scotland continues to expand, with the development of a co-ordinated and coherent sector able to engage with, and help develop, government policy and forest management practice. However, policy makers and practitioners are still developing approaches to support the continued engagement of urban communities, addressing the different challenges associated with these areas (e.g. a greater number and diversity of people), and there are plenty of opportunities to learn from sharing the experience of colleagues and counterparts in the other countries covered in this paper.

WALES*Meanings and origins*

The 20th century saw an expansion of woodlands in Wales, from around 5% of land cover in 1918 to around 14% in

2008. Some 40% of this is owned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and managed on their behalf by FC Wales (FCW). Much of this expansion was on the uplands, providing timber for the mining industry and later supplying wood processing industries. Much of planting took place in the industrial areas of the South Wales valleys, in close proximity to centres of population. Owing to the decline in industry, these same Valleys are now some of the most deprived areas of Great Britain with rates of unemployment and ill health way above the national UK averages. In 2001/02 overall Wales employment rates ranged from 80% in Powys and Monmouthshire to 67% in Neath Port Talbot and 65% in Merthyr Tydfil. The latter had some of the largest proportions of people not working due to long-term illness or disability (WAG 2009).

Community forestry in Wales has, until recently, revolved around encouraging participation in forest management decision-making processes. In this relationship, the state retains the dominant role, and some question whether this involvement represents a genuine attempt to involve and empower local people (Milbourne *et al.* 2006).

Models

Community forestry initiatives in Wales have taken several forms over the years. Those involving the state, through FCW, include Forest Design Plans⁸, Tir Coed and Cydcoed. There are also many individual, local projects that, recently, are developing a shared identity, through the support of organisations such as Coed Lleol, a partnership organisation with a steering committee representing non-government and government agencies (Coed Lleol 2009).

As is the case throughout Great Britain, the predominant mode of involvement for local people in the management of public woodland is through the Forest Design Plan (FDP) process. Introduced in 1992, the process has been refined in the Coed y Cymoedd (Valleys) District and has culminated, in 2001–2006, in a Valleys-wide community consultation exercise designed to complement the FDP process. This process was termed ‘Valleys Woods for Valleys People’.

More community focused work is project based. Tir Coed was established in 1999 as a partnership organisation (including FCW) to promote the benefits of woodland and to encourage increased involvement of local people in woodland. Tir Coed runs projects and initiatives both on and off the public woodland estate (Tir Coed 2009). In response to the drivers outlined below, FCW has developed a number of projects specifically aimed at involving communities in woodlands. Most notable of these are Treeregeneration and Meirionnydd Oak Woods projects in north Wales, and the geographically broader Cydcoed programme in north, west

and south Wales. Cydcoed forms the most substantial part of FCW’s experience with community forestry and is the basis of the case study presented here.

Policy drivers

Both the Valleys Woods for Valleys People initiative and access to European Structural Funds, through the designation of West Wales and the Valleys as qualifying for Objective One status, coincided with the publication of the new woodland strategy for Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2001). This provided an impetus to use woodlands as a social and cultural asset for disadvantaged communities; to provide opportunities for people to influence the management of woods close to where they live; to promote health through access to woodlands for all communities; and to promote best practice in woodland management.

It is evident, from both these policy drivers and the delivery programmes developed by FCW to date, that community forestry in Wales is about encouraging people to be involved in woodlands. It concerns using woodlands as a resource with which to enhance social capital, increase educational, health and wellbeing opportunities and encourage economic regeneration through enterprise development. However, the political and strategic landscape of Wales is changing. The WAG is keen to focus on spatially targeted programmes for regeneration, with particular emphasis on the urban centres of Wales. A recent conference hosted by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) (Realising Rural Assets, 2008) drew attention to the potential for the transfer of public assets to the private and community sector which, if adopted, could have significant impacts for FCW managed land.

Outcomes

Cydcoed was a £16 million European Union Objective 1 and Welsh Assembly Government funded grant and community development programme, specifically aimed at using woodlands as a means to empower and involve communities. The programme ran from 2001–2008 and involved 163 communities across Wales, helping them to make better use of woodlands for jobs, economic regeneration, social inclusion, recreation and conservation. Initiatives ranged from small school grounds projects, through to those managed by tenants and residents associations and Communities First⁹ partnerships, to social enterprises and woodland businesses. FCW together with FC Great Britain commissioned a complete evaluation of Cydcoed in 2006, and this section draws on the evidence presented there (Forest Research 2008).

Cydcoed provided 100% funding of the project costs. Community group members particularly valued this, as many

⁸ Forest Design Plans are prepared every ten years, containing detailed management planning for the next 10 years, with indicative planning for the 20 years beyond that. They are required for all national forest estate, and for larger private forest as a condition of grant support. Public consultation is a mandatory part of the preparation process.

⁹ Communities First is the Welsh Assembly Government’s flagship programme to improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales (<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/regeneration/communitiesfirst/?lang=en>)

are working as volunteers with little experience of fundraising. The programme supported a wide range of project activities that would benefit woodlands and encourage people into them. This included woodland management, creation and purchase; access work (paths, signs, benches and all-ability access); community arts projects of all kinds; training related to project delivery; and woodland buildings. Work could take place on land in any ownership - public, private, FCW managed Estate - as long as appropriate agreements and long-term commitments were in place.

The programme was set up to be as unbureaucratic as possible. Project staff aimed to indicate likelihood of funding success to applicants early in the process to minimise the risk of volunteers wasting time on detailed grant applications. Decisions on applications were made quickly and the programme was flexible enough to accommodate change. The programme was managed to be risk aware, not risk averse, to help groups who had never managed funds or projects before to receive grant aid for a good quality project. However, risk assessments were carried out to ensure that support mechanisms were in place to mitigate potential areas of difficulty.

Importantly, Cydcoed was not simply a grant programme. Four Project Officers in North, West, South and South-East Wales, all with community development experience, worked closely with each community group from start to finish to facilitate the project development process and provide support with, for example, governance, legal agreements, consultations, project development and planning, and long term sustainability. This model of focussed development support *plus* funding is one that is increasingly recognised as contributing to the effective investment of public funds at community level and most likely to result in real local capacity.

The fact that funds were given directly to community groups themselves to manage was also important. Although professional help was available if required, groups decided what was needed, and entered into and paid for delivery contracts themselves. This contributed to skills development and conferred local power - one group commented, 'Now that we have the money, the County Council has to listen to us!' Working together on the delivery of Cydcoed projects, and the involvement of groups and individuals in woodland activities and events, helped develop a social 'glue' of fun, new skills and connection with trees, woodlands and forests.

Three examples of ways in which Cydcoed grants were used, are given in box 2. In addition to these qualitative 'pen pictures', more quantitative assessments of impact revealed that more than a third of participants in Cydcoed projects considered that their health had improved a little or considerably (table 2).

Changes and challenges

Whilst there were opportunities for FCW itself to learn from and capitalise on the experience of delivering the programme, it is clear that the contribution by Cydcoed to the WAG strategic agenda in Wales has been considerable. The WAG agenda revolves around the vision of a sustainable Wales where action for social, economic and environmental improvement work together to create positive change. Increased community empowerment, improved social cohesion and building social capital have been the key successes of the Cydcoed programme - communities across the most deprived areas of Wales have improved their potential to be able to work together to deliver benefits to their locality.

WAG First Minister endorsed Cydcoed enthusiastically at

BOX 2 Examples of Cydcoed grants (source: unpublished Cydcoed Project Monitoring and Completion Reports)

Afan Argoed mountain bike trails project received one of the largest Cydcoed grants of £676 000, which was managed by the volunteer members of Glyncorwg Ponds Association. They created three world-class mountain bike trails in FCW managed woodland in the Upper Afan valley in South Wales, and built a visitor centre for users of the forest at nearby Glyncorwg ponds. It is now renowned for mountain biking and as a success in attracting inward investment and working in partnerships. The project has transformed what was a post industrial landscape with a community in decline into a tourism destination with the real prospect of a sustainable economic future.

A former landfill site at Glan Morfa, Rhyl in North Wales provided the inspiration for a major woodland creation project, undertaken by Marsh Road Residents Association with a Cydcoed grant of £250 000. Already over 1000 local people and 200 local school children have been involved in the project in various ways, in what is one of the most deprived communities in Wales. Two and a half thousand trees have been planted, 7 km of access paths and 5 km of new and improved cycle track have been laid, and the new woodland will in time provide the whole community with good quality green space and a 'breath of fresh air' on their doorsteps. The Residents Association is proud that the project has created a focus for community action and cohesion through volunteering opportunities and are currently undergoing leader training for improving local health and wellbeing through a 'walk your way to health' initiative.

In West Wales, Friends of Pembroke School successfully bid for £85 000 of Cydcoed grant aid for their project in Cuckoo Woods. At the heart of the project is the provision of key skills, extra-curricular activity and opportunities for young people at risk of exclusion from the school to gain vocational qualifications. The project has opened up access for the public and pupils to Cuckoo Woods by creating pathways, steps and bridges. A new not-for-profit company has been formed employing 12 part-time staff to work on the project, and the Open College Network has recently accredited the courses on offer. The number of young people opting to do the courses has risen from 24 in 2006 to 150 in 2008.

TABLE 2 Perceived changes in health reported by Cydcoed participants

	My physical health has (% of respondents)			
	Got worse	Has not changed	Improved a little	Improved considerably
Male	1.2	57.3	32.9	8.5
Female	0.0	61.4	33.3	5.3
<45 yrs	0.0	53.7	34.1	12.2
45-64 yrs	0.0	61.0	35.6	3.4
>64yrs	2.6	59.0	30.8	7.7
Total (N=139)	0.7	53.8	33.8	7.2

Source: Forest Research 2008

the Bruton Park project launch in North Wales:

The Cydcoed Team has done a terrific job in inspiring communities to believe in themselves. I'm looking forward to seeing more of these tremendous projects creating more job opportunities, a greater sense of self worth and a better environment. Cydcoed proves it is possible to create sustainable opportunities which will have a long term impact on the prosperity of the people of Wales. (Rhodri Morgan, 2003).

So what does the future hold for community forestry in Wales? The Woodland Strategy is currently being revised, and the public consultation included the proposal to 'encourage a more varied approach to involving more communities in woodlands, especially on the Assembly [i.e. public] woodland estate'. There is a real opportunity to build on the work of recent years to explore further possibilities to address and deliver on a whole range of key social and economic issues - health inequalities, education and training, climate change, enterprise, biodiversity. Trees and woodlands capture people's imaginations and can be a real catalyst for change. Interesting and radical options are already being proposed. FCW is exploring the lease of Welsh Assembly Government woodlands to community enterprises. A new network, Llais y Goedwig (a community woodland network in Wales) has been set up with the support of Coed Lleol to build links and share experiences (Coed Lleol 2009). Two of the largest Forest Districts are soon to have dedicated community engagement officers. The way forward for FC Wales lies in encouraging increased community involvement in woodland both on and off the Assembly estate, in building cross-border communication and learning opportunities and in spatially targeting delivery towards those in greatest need. FC Wales policy and programme development reflects this new direction and focus.

DISCUSSION

Within this preliminary overview of community forestry in the three countries we can see a resonance with the issues that are identified in the international literature on community forestry: tenure, policy and institutional context,

benefit distribution, learning processes, and sustainability. These themes have a British flavour to them, which relate to the policy drivers behind forestry, the highly urbanised population and historical disconnect between communities and forests. In this section we draw together these common themes and compare them with the wider context of thinking about community forestry.

Meanings and models

The three country accounts show that in different contexts, different interpretations of community forestry are emerging. One distinction often applied in Great Britain is that between community woodlands and community forests. In England the Community Forests are formally designated geographical areas within which specific programmes operate; community woodlands are created with communities. These community forests incorporate private land where special grants have been offered to the owners to encourage tree planting. Although there are many activities to support local people's use of the woodlands for recreation and health benefits (Kessel *et al.* 2009), they do not have a formal management role. In these cases, where the term 'community forest' has roots in the urban forestry movement (Johnston 1999), we have forestry *for* the community, rather than *with* the community. The urban models elsewhere in Great Britain (notably WIAT in Scotland, and new plans for the Welsh Valleys) also fall into this category. This form of community forestry is distinct from that generally recognised by the term internationally, but is inevitably included in the discourse in Great Britain because of the name. Professionals in England are careful to refer to community *woodlands* when discussing specific places owned, managed or co-managed by community groups.

Elsewhere, particularly in Scotland, the 'rural model' for community forestry is most easily compared with community forests in countries such as Nepal (Bhattacharya and Basnyat 2005). It is in the rural context that the community woodlands take on most economic significance for communities, although the scale of this contribution, and the comparison with the economic significance of employment in state-owned forests, is not yet known¹⁰. Communities may purchase such woodlands from private owners or FCS, or form management

agreements with them. This community woodland model is also emerging in Wales. Although distinguished as typically rural, community woodlands of this type are being established in urban areas as well as rural. Again, the term 'woodland' is used most commonly, but in Scotland there are cases where community woodlands are referred to as 'community forests' (Matheson 2000, Tylden-Wright 2000b), because the scale and timber focus make this appropriate.

In the international context, land and forest tenure is of great interest in assessing the success of community forestry (e.g. Sunderlin 2006, Wily 2004). In the case of Great Britain, or any of its constituent countries, tenure is conspicuous by its diversity. The English Community Forests are zones incorporating many different landowners. The community woodlands created with the support of Cyd Coed include partnerships with FCW to manage public (WAG) forests, as well as woodlands owned by schools, local authorities and in a few cases individuals. In Scotland, the same diversity of ownership applies to the urban forestry areas, while the rural community woodlands have in some cases been purchased through zealous fund-raising efforts by the community group, and in others are managed through agreements with the owners (FC or private). This diversity is proliferating as discussions of lease agreements take place in the Scottish and Welsh contexts, and will provide rich material for further research.

Policy, social benefit and empowerment

A central feature of the cases presented here is the role of the state in community forestry. In England we see the lead provided by a state agency other than the one responsible for forestry. In Scotland we see the evolution of relations from the adversarial stances of the 1990s to one of partnership and policy support. In Wales, state forestry has been involved peripherally by hosting a large EU grant, but is now actively involved in adopting the lessons from this experience. There are in addition a (possibly large) number of community woodlands emerging solely through local efforts, and this experience remains to be assembled and analysed, but it is fair to say that there is a significant role of government policy in the Great Britain story which merits analysis.

'Joined up' governance and partnership working (connecting the state, private and voluntary sectors, and communities) have become central concepts to 'mixed liberal welfare states' including the UK, since the 1990s (Rummery 2006, Taylor 2006). Community forestry is a reflection of that wider trend (Campbell and Bryan 2006, Johnston 2002, Weldon 2004), reflected globally in some critiques of the political aspects of decentralised forest management (Bradshaw 2003, Larson 2003, McCarthy 2005).

This close link with government is reflected in some of the language around community forestry in Great Britain,

characterised by policy jargon: social deprivation index, outcome focus, delivery, targets, indicators. This language is oriented towards demonstrating the benefits to society of trees, woods and forests, as prioritised in the country forestry strategies. These are the motivations for government support, but conversely the strong role of such support in early stages can bring later concerns about sustainability. A recurring theme in the England case study is funding commitment and political will, with some stakeholders expressing frustration at withdrawal of national and FC funding, and others emphasising the shift to regional government and the need for funding to be aligned with regional economic priorities. In Scotland too there is a focus on assessment of public funding support, accompanied by questions about 'value for money' and 'public benefit'.

A particular policy concern in all three countries of Great Britain is to target resources for particular parts of society. This targeting can be seen to take two main forms in the cases presented here: rurality, or deprivation. The asset transfer schemes in Scotland target rural areas, by limiting the size of population. In contrast, the Community Forestry Programme in England, WIAT in Scotland, and Cydcoed in Wales, all target areas of multiple deprivation¹¹. This targeting has parallels with the focus of the international literature on community forestry on its contribution to poverty alleviation (Adhikari 2005, Glasmeier and Farrigan 2005, Sunderlin 2006).

Much of that literature is moving from a focus on basic income to a more nuanced understanding of equity of benefit distribution and empowerment, and this too is an area which merits further research in the Great Britain context. Although the author of each country section above has outlined benefits experienced within the targeted areas, to date there has been no evaluation of the employment or income benefits created by community forests or woodlands, either generically or by income or social group. Furthermore, these approaches based on statistics are a relatively blunt instrument for understanding the impact that increased involvement with woodlands has on a person's life. If outcomes are to be measured only in terms of jobs created, or community income, the benefits will be seen as highly localised. The arguments for community forestry (and hence sustainability of political support) will depend on perception and communication of a wider range of benefits.

One dimension of those wider benefits is expressed in the international literature about 'empowerment' (e.g. McDaniel 2003, Reed and McIlveen 2006, Rhee 2000). In the Great Britain context this is reflected most conspicuously in the rural Scottish context, with more subdued forms evident in Wales and England. Empowerment may be represented by change of ownership (either through proactive lobbying and fund-raising, or more recently through the Land Reform Act and the National Forest Land Scheme), by funding

¹⁰ Various studies are in process.

¹¹ In GB, a significant measure of poverty is the 'Index of Multiple Deprivation', a small-scale combination of indicators, used to target regeneration policy for over thirty years (CLG. 2007, Noble *et al.* 2006, Scottish Government 2006, WAG 2008).

mechanisms (as in Cydcoed), or by decision-sharing (as in the partnerships developed in the English Community Forests). Enhancing community 'capacity' is expressed in various ways as a goal of all three country forest strategies, and preliminary research is underway to understand how that can be evaluated. In Scotland, the increasing number of community woodland groups, levels of participation, area of forest resource under community management, and level and sources of income, are given as indicators of improvement in this area (Edwards *et al.* 2008) but the full meaning of 'community capacity' and its relation to more global discourses of empowerment merit further attention. One aspect of this capacity is networking and organisation building. In both Scotland and Wales, there has been a move towards supporting community woodlands through a formal network, in partnership with the FC, while networking in England has been more diverse and led by the NGO sector.

Learning

A theme reiterated by all the authors of the country sections is that of learning. Learning, in the sense of adaptive management, also appears to characterise the most advanced versions of community or participatory forest management globally (Lawrence 2007). This adaptiveness requires both internal (community) and external (policy and organisational) learning.

How can opportunities for learning from experience be enhanced, both within and between organisations and geographical locations? During the seminar, doubts were expressed about the extent to which 'institutional memory' was being captured – and indeed this paper is intended as a first step in response to that concern. The value of recognising achievements and failures, within context, and comparing factors that support success across different contexts, was recognised. Furthermore, sometimes only when participants become aware of the development of experiences, models and tenure arrangements that differ from their own, do they realise that there is such a range of experience to share, and possibly apply to their own situations. This awareness is flourishing in Great Britain, with the development of community woodland networks and organisations in all three countries, and participation in international forums such as this. There are other, informal, types of learning – the personal relationships built up in the context of shaping trust and partnerships, mentioned in the England case study, for example.

Formal opportunities for learning exist in the evaluations that are usually commissioned to assess the results of public funding, and contributors noted some aspects which are important to make the most of these opportunities. The Cydcoed evaluation, for example, found that an absence of baseline data made it difficult to assess any changes resulting from the project (Forest Research 2008). More widely, reviews are often completed as a formality, or as an outward looking defence of public spending, and do not feed into internal learning processes. 'Value for money' is sometimes demonstrated by such evaluations, but also by a

range of other more intangible indicators. In particular, the continuation of partnerships and working relationships with communities indicates a belief that the community forests are worthwhile.

CONCLUSION

Community forestry is a diverse category of activities in Great Britain, a reaction to the historic decline of woodland cover, the 20th century focus on upland conifer plantations, and centuries of history leading to devolution; combined with on the one hand high population density, urbanisation and ethnic diversity, resulting in a society divorced from direct experiences of woodland; and on the other hand rural populations keen to reassert their identities and economic connection with the land around them. This paper forms only a preliminary overview of the wide range of motives, meanings and models constituted by such a diverse context. In particular the motives of government, in connecting with community or taking a more broad-brush approach to alleviating social and environmental deprivation, are also affected by this diversity.

Each author has a different perception of the scope for ongoing political support for forestry, and in particular community forestry. This support is clearest in Scotland and has resulted in the National Forest Land Scheme and WIAT. The shift to regionalisation of planning, on the other hand, has contributed to a perceived policy vacuum in England, where agencies must now engage with the (more economically-driven) regional development authorities. In Wales, the future of community forestry looks promising with the recent publication of the new strategy. Government financial support to the forestry sector is, however, decreasing in all three countries, and priorities come under ever sharper scrutiny. At the same time, there is a perceived risk that the state can crowd out existing community engagement, and professionals are actively thinking through how to facilitate community empowerment without working 'on their behalf'. There are certainly challenges for the institutional culture of forestry, at a highly dynamic moment in the history of British forestry.

In this overview, which focuses particularly on collating experiences with policy in community forestry, we see some similarities with broad trends in international experience (Lawrence 2007). We see a move towards congruence of policy and community activism, with a move away from conflict and towards institutional support for community participation and, in some cases, ownership. This has all taken place within an ongoing framework of forest regulation, and grant incentives. Within this, and to the extent that there is institutional stability, we see a focus on social distribution of benefits; this is evident at the macro level, with government targeting of resources at areas of high deprivation. Organisational building and maturity of partnerships is emerging, particularly in Scotland.

To date there has been little opportunity for taking stock and sharing experience. Opportunities for formal

learning rely on the collection of statistics and evaluation of individual projects. Any attempts at community adaptive forest management are documented only informally. This overview demonstrates the need for more, and different kinds of, evidence. Perhaps of necessity, official approaches to evaluation focus on measurements, numbers and inputs. What is still lacking is a thorough understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the many different kinds of people involved. What do community, empowerment, partnership, ownership and forests mean to them?

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