

Urban Roots Initiative Glasgow, Scotland



A mixed woodland plantation within a densely populated urban environment that is managed in partnership with the local authority

This case study is one of a set written as part of a Forest Research project. Some case studies are written by the community group, others by researchers who visited and interviewed group members, but they have all been validated and endorsed by the community groups.

Forest Research developed a standard method for describing the case studies, outlined in Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2013 "A framework for sharing experiences of community woodland groups" Forestry Commission Research Note 15 (available from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications).

The case study comprises three parts:

1. The **Group Profile** provides essential information about the form and function of the community woodland group. Profiles were prepared following the methodology
2. The **Change Narrative** which documents key moments in the evolution of the community woodland group with a particular focus on the evolution of engagement and empowerment
3. The **Engagement and Impacts Timeline** documents milestones in the development of the community woodland group, its woodland and any assumed or evidenced impacts.

The case studies collectively provide a resource which documents the diversity and evolution of community woodland groups across Scotland, Wales and England. The method ensures that the case studies are consistent and can be compared with each other. We welcome further case studies to add to this growing resource.

For further information, and for the detailed case study method, please contact:

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1. Group profile

Woodland: Malls Mire Community Woodland, Toryglen, Glasgow
Map ref: NS 602620
Webpage: <http://www.urbanroots.org.uk>
Date of profile: January 2014
Resources: Interview with Woodland Officer and site visit, Malls Mire Management Plan 2012-2014.

1. Institutional context (in January 2014)	
1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)	<p>The woodland has a shared ownership between Glasgow City Council (c. 85%) and South Lanarkshire Council (c. 15%). Urban Roots has a single, rolling use agreement (without expiry date) with Glasgow City Council, and a letter from South Lanarkshire Council supporting the activities of the group. The agreement from Glasgow City Council has built-in assessment timescales but there is no obligation to carry out any review or assessment.</p> <p>The Urban Roots Initiative also manages several community gardens in addition to the woodland.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Formal agreement (public)</p>
1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)	<p>Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) is guaranteed by the Land Reform Act. All woodland products are the property of the Councils owning the land.</p>
1.3 Regulations/responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>There is no obligation on behalf of either one of the parties to review the use agreement.</p>

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2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise	
2.1 Group members, representation and decision making	<p>Urban Roots targets their activities and communication to the community of southeast Glasgow. Anyone is eligible to join Urban Roots as a member. No membership fee is charged, which is a strategic decision to ensure the group remains accessible and open to all. The group currently has about 64 members after starting to offer memberships in 2013. The community woodland, however, engages and works with hundreds of people. Whilst the group does not offer a junior membership, many of its activities are targeted at young people.</p> <p>Operational decisions are made by the project manager and project coordinator, and voted on by the board of six Directors. The Board is elected by members at the AGM. Half of the serving directors have to stand down each year but they can be re-elected up to three times consecutively. All elected Directors must be from the local area, but people living further afield can be co-opted onto the board if they have special skills. Paid staff members are not allowed to join the Board as a Director.</p>
2.2 Communication and learning processes	<p>Urban Roots communicates their events and activities to the community by means of their website, a Facebook page, a range of different promotional materials and word-of-mouth communication. In addition, activities are promoted through local schools, a newsletter and a database of interested parties who are sent emails for relevant activities. Urban Roots also aims to collect the contact details of people visiting the woodland on event days.</p> <p>Knowledge and expertise about forestry is primarily held with the community woodland officer, who is regularly called upon by other UR staff to offer advice and support for tree-management issues that arise in other (garden) sites that UR manage. The group evaluates its functioning at team meetings, board meetings, staff support and enabling sessions and annual staff away days that provide a forum for improving communication and evaluating all aspects of the organisation's functioning.</p>
2.3 Structure and legal status	<p>Urban Roots Initiative is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee (SC362134) with charitable status (SC040647). Although currently Urban Roots is not permitted by Glasgow City Council to trade any woodland products, the organisation does trade products from other activities external to the woodland (e.g., vegetables, honey and services such as outdoor learning CLPL sessions for schools).</p>

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	<p>Classification of legal form: Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee</p>
<p>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</p>	<p>Company Law, Charity Law</p>
<p>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</p>	<p>Urban Roots has prepared a woodland management plan for Malls Mire (2012-2014) intended to be part of a bid to the Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) programme administered by FCS. The aims of woodland management, as outlined in this plan, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage the mixed habitats in Malls Mire using low impact methods. • To ensure the continuation of woodland cover on the site while ensuring the mosaic of open grassland and wetland habitats do not become impoverished. • To continue to support regionally important species. • To continue to facilitate and increase community involvement in the management of Malls Mire. <p>This woodland management plan has been used in a range of other submitted grant applications. However, the recommendations in the management plan are not binding. The contents of the use agreement with the council have been tailored for compatibility with the management plan.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the WIAT grant scheme for which the management plan had been tailored, the focus is predominantly the woodland, rather than any other of the habitats supported by the site. This is seen by the group as a short coming, but not a serious one, given the importance of undertaking woodland management on the site which has only received minimal level of management since the trees were planted in 1993.</p> <p>Overall aim of plan: Quality of life</p>

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2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan	<p>Small-scale woodland (and other non-woodland habitat) management is carried out by the woodland officer, with support from regular volunteers. Fund-raising, planning and administration of large scale silvicultural and capital works is carried out by the woodland officer, with technical support / input from an officer from Glasgow City Council's natural environment team.</p> <p>Fundraising and planning of all social programmes including education programmes with local schools, the delivery of Forest School, Branching Out and a programme of seasonal events is entirely carried out by the woodland officer. Delivery of some of the social programme is supported by contracting specialist staff on a sessional basis but overseen by the woodland officer.</p> <p>The Woodland Officer is employed on a fulltime basis and this post is currently funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.</p>
2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability	<p>The woodland that Urban Roots is currently managing falls under the ownership of two local authorities. The current use agreement with Glasgow City Council precludes the group from selling any timber or non-timber forest products harvested from the site and therefore generating income from trading. The group is interested in exploring opportunities to trade timber and non-timber forest products in the future. This would, however, require a re-negotiation of the existing use agreement.</p> <p>The funds for managing Malls Mire (the community woodland project element of Urban Roots), amounting to nearly £300,000 over the past five years, have come from grant schemes. Based on knowledge of the sector and experience, it is expected that this operating model is sustainable given the location of the woodland, which is both urban and socio-economically deprived, allowing easy access to a wide variety of grant schemes. This is also evident from an exponential increase of funding for the delivery of specific projects in Malls Mire between 2010 and 2013. It is, however, acknowledged that the frequency and type of activities that can be supported by grants varies depending on availability of grant schemes.</p> <p>Although other elements of Urban Roots (e.g., beekeeping, community gardening) generate a small income through trading (e.g., sale of honey and other produce, and the delivery of beekeeping courses), this income is</p>

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	ring-fenced to cover the costs associated with the particular project raising that income (e.g., sale of honey goes back to the beekeeping project).
2.8 Benefit distribution rules	The woodland derived benefits are not financial. The group's management outputs are largely public and environmental benefits, and the benefits to individuals of taking part in activities within the woodland.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	Urban Roots engages in a partnership with Glasgow City around managing the woodland.
3.2 Associations	Urban Roots is a member of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA). The organisation is also member of a variety of other associations, which are not of direct relevance to the woodland activities but are linked to the portfolio of activities Urban Roots is involved with.
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest/ woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malls Mire is an 8.3 ha woodland, located between Toryglen and Rutherglen in a densely populated area of Glasgow. The majority of the local population lives in tenement flats with no adjoining green space. The woodland is located adjacent to a railway line and very close to the river Clyde. Toryglen is an area within the top 2 % of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Due to its urban location, the entrance of the woodland is easily accessible by foot, public transport and car. The accessibility of the path network within the woodland is somewhat limited since the trails do not have a compacted surface. Some of the existing paths get waterlogged after persistent rainfall and steep gradients need to be negotiated. Aspen, Italian alder and ash collectively make up 78 % of total woodland cover. Other species include: gean (bird cherry), birch, larch, oak, Scots pine and hawthorn. Most trees have been planted in 1993 with a few older willows around the pond and near the railway.

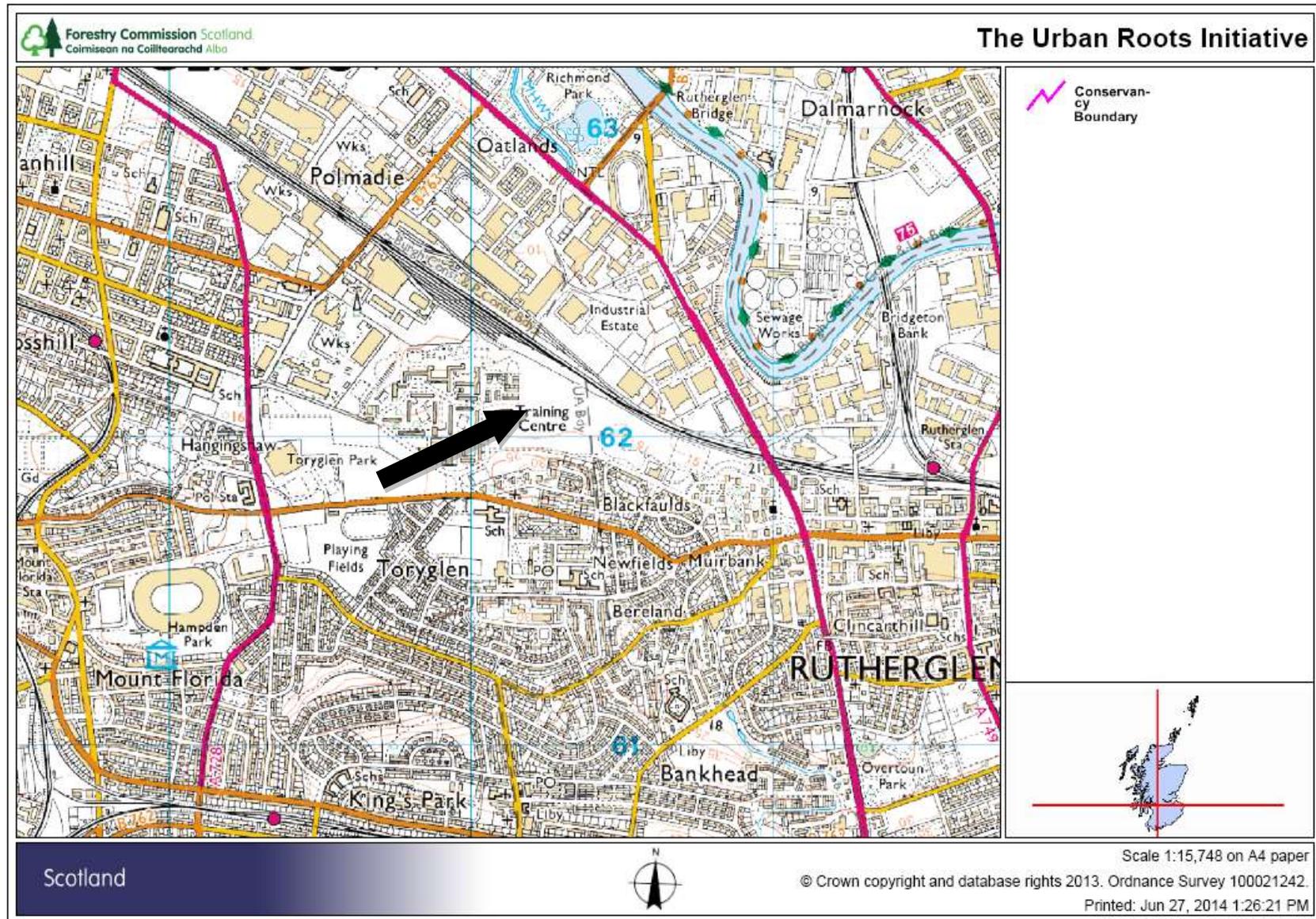
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	<p>The site includes two non-permanent ponds. A historic deposition of debris and rubble is evident in certain parts of the site. Areas of the woodland have been contaminated with industrial waste including chromium, although formal evidence is limited. A large area of open wetland habitat near the middle of the site has been left unplanted with trees in recognition of its value as a wetland habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classification of woodland type: Mixed mainly broadleaved• It is unclear what motivated the choice of tree species and planting regime. Small areas of the woodland have been thinned by the woodland officer and volunteers, which was planned as part of the wider restructuring programme outlined in the management plan. Trees that have been subject to windthrow have been cut and left on site.• Trees are planted in lines on furrows with shallow trenches in between and the woodland has a high density. As a result, both individual tree and stand stability is poor throughout the site.• The woodland attracts roe deer, foxes, weasels and many small mammals such as shrews. Due to the diverse habitat with dry and wet areas, the woodland is also home to many invertebrates such as bumblebees, dragonflies and mayflies. Numerous biodiversity surveys have been formally undertaken since the 80s and sightings of interest are reported and recorded by the woodland officer and data are sent to the Glasgow Region Biological Records Centre. The majority of the woodland (75%) is recognized by Glasgow City Council as a Local Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (L-SINC). The area that falls within Glasgow City Council is in the process of being declared a Local Nature Reserve.
4.2 Woodland and group funding sources	Due to the urban character of the woodland and its location within a deprived community, the group can tap into a wide variety of funding resources. These extend beyond woodland-specific grants to those aimed at community engagement, health improvement, volunteering and education. Furthermore, the Malls Mire project can access limited funding through Glasgow City Council as well.

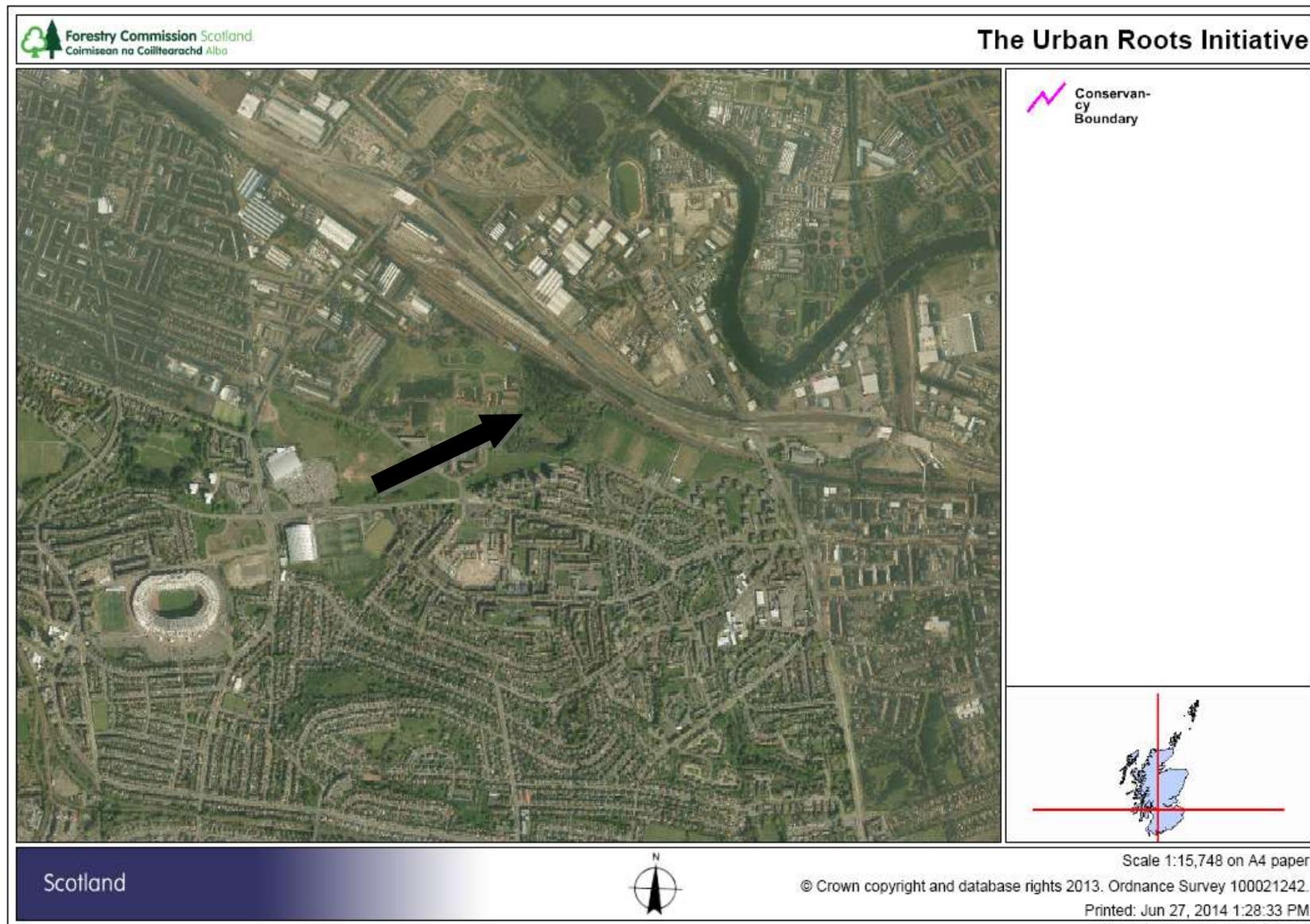
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	<p>Grants for forest management, community engagement and access improvements have come from a wide range of sources including: Heritage Lottery (£75,730), Glasgow City Neighbourhood Qualities Fund (£6,228), and the Legacy Active Places Fund (£41,009) and Glasgow City Council (£5,000). The group was successful in applying to the FCS Seedcorn Fund (£4,995) for the purpose of preparing a woodland management plan and organising a volunteer group.</p> <p>Community Woodland Association contributed £2,000 to a woodworking event in the woodland. A grant by Zero Waste Scotland (£4,927) served to clear rubbish and fly tipping. Other grants have been received from Fair Share Lottery (£89,000 – shared with the Community Gardening project), People Postcode Lottery Trust (£6940), Big Lottery Fund - Awards for All (£7,630), Comic Relief (£7,500), Community and Families Fund (£8,982), RBS Volunteering Fund (£13,186) and Make a Splash (£2,500). These mainly served to organise activities and events in the woodland and to involve the community.</p> <p>In addition to the above funds, the Malls Mire project benefits from funds that are received by Urban Roots as a whole. For example, the Robertson Trust has funded overhead costs (i.e., office lease, office equipment, admin support) for the past four years and have invited Urban Roots to apply for a further two years. At certain points the Woodland Officer’s post was supported from the organisation reserve funds. These are built up from a number of different sources across the organisation as a whole.</p>
<p>4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital</p>	<p>The Woodland Officer has expertise in forestry and the preparation of management plans along criteria of best practice. In addition, the Urban Roots Board comprises people with a variety of skills including fundraising, social work and community development.</p> <p>The Woodland Officer liaised with a Tree Officer and Biodiversity Officers from Glasgow City Council (GCC), as well as FCS staff, in preparing the Malls Mire woodland management plan. GCC has also supported planning the large-scale woodland management activities. They provided expertise (e.g., advising of the administration of large-scale woodland management activities) and staff resources (e.g., landscape architect) free of charge. Knowledge is passed on internally if deemed to be of benefit to the group as a whole. The CWA mailing list and staff have been actively consulted to gain advice on matters such as administering contracts.</p>

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2. Change Narrative

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

Urban Roots was set up in December 2008 by members of The Toryglen Gardening Club and The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), who had been volunteering in the woodland since 2007 (**informal enjoyment** to **active engagement**). Grants by Awards for All and People's Postcode Lottery Fund served to fund the woodland officer post (0.2 FTE) initially (**active engagement** to **group formation**). At present, this role is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Although the City Council had permitted community use for several years already, a formal use agreement was not signed until 2012 (**group formation** to **decision-making**). This delay had two main reasons: (1) the local authority had communicated that preparing a use agreement would be a lengthy and legally complex process, and (2) a use agreement would not change the use rights for the community group. A use agreement was eventually prepared because it was a requirement when applying for larger grants from bodies such as Heritage Lottery Fund. For previous (smaller) grant applications, a letter of support by Glasgow City Council had sufficed. The group therefore already progressed from **group formation** to **decision-making** in 2008 when the first funding solely for Malls Mire was received.

Following introduction of the WIAT-scheme by FCS promoting urban woodlands to improve quality of life, the Urban Roots woodland officer successfully applied to the FCS Community Seedcorn Fund in order to prepare a WIAT-management plan and to organize a volunteer group in November 2011. However, the WIAT scheme came to an end before Malls Mire could be entered into the scheme.

Instead, Urban Roots sought funding from a number of other smaller funds before finally submitting their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which was accepted in July 2013. The group is currently working on silvicultural thinning of the woodland with the help of this grant. This is required to re-structure the woodland and to secure its regeneration. The funds also contribute to community education events (e.g. the delivery of seasonal events, an education programme with two local schools) and the delivery of a range of different educational and therapeutic social programmes aimed at different sectors of the local community.

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The group has also recently secured funding from a number of sources including the Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund and Glasgow Council Neighbourhood Qualities Fund, which will be used towards improving the accessibility of the woodland.

Urban Roots was not founded with the prime objective of bringing Malls Mire back into management. It aims, more broadly, to involve the local community in projects that improve the amenity and health of urban greenspace in the southeast of Glasgow. With support of the Fair Share Grant and other funds, projects such as community gardening and a school orchard have also been developed. A third project, beekeeping, was entirely self-funded through providing paid workshops in beekeeping.

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

Facilitating factors

- **A group of highly motivated local people** from The Toryglen Gardening Club and TCV, who developed the idea of bringing Malls Mire into active management.
- **External funding** to cover staff salaries and project costs.
- **Local authorities' endorsement** of community involvement in bringing Malls Mire back into management. This brought about the opportunity for Urban Roots to sign a use agreement with Glasgow City Council, which has served the group well in applying for grant funding.
- **The woodland location on the boundary between Glasgow and South Lanarkshire Councils.** Endorsement of the project by two local authorities has worked in favour of the group when accessing resources, needed for such activities as removal of fly-tipped rubbish. The group could also tap into a wider diversity of expertise, resources and services such as litter collection, community payback teams etc.

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- **The socio-economically deprived and urban character of the location** allows the group to tap into a wide range of grants for woodland management and community engagement/education. In addition, the project attracts a lot of volunteers. In fact, the woodland manager frequently has to turn down requests for voluntary work by organizations such as the Prince's Trust in order to focus resources on the funded core activities.
- **Innovative contributions by interns and sessional workers**, who are involved with Urban Roots to undertake specific projects. Some of these support staff have managed to raise additional funds by introducing an idea and taking it forward. For example, one sessional worker managed to bring in £2,500 to support a Forest School programme with an art theme.

Barriers

- **The woodland location on the boundary between Glasgow and South Lanarkshire Councils** sometimes leads to increases bureaucracy because decisions need to be run by two local authorities.
- **The socio-economically deprived and urban character of the location** has made the woodland prone to vandalism (to trees and interpretation signs). The proximity of many people combined with a general lack of understanding of the reasons to manage the woodland and cultural variation in "images of nature" sometimes results in resistance to silvicultural activities.
- The group very much works on a grant-to-grant basis, which has resulted in limited availability of stable income streams due to it having to rely on the availability of grant schemes, and the success of any applications made, to undertake certain activities. It also requires significant investment of time by the Woodland Officer in terms of looking for and submitting grant applications. In theory, the sale of firewood from tree thinnings could provide the group with a stable, albeit limited, source of income. However, the opportunities to generate an income from firewood sales and developing other income-generating activities (e.g., charging participants for the delivery of a walking group) are limited because **the terms of the use agreement put restrictions on generating income from the woodland**. As a result, grants need

to pay for staff time in addition to woodland management and the group is unable to become self-supportive in its current form. And importantly, timber is not harvested from the site and used as a renewable resource as it is elsewhere.

3. Evolution of income streams

The management of Malls Mire is nearly completely reliant on grant funding. The total of grant funding dedicated to the delivery of woodland projects has increased over the past years from about £15,000 in 2011 to about £123,000 in 2013.

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

Malls Mire woodland was planted in 1993, along with several smaller woodlands elsewhere in Glasgow, by Wise-Group social enterprise on behalf of Glasgow City Council. This endeavour was funded by FCS. Although an exact reason for tree planting could not be pinpointed, several potential drivers could be identified. Firstly, it might have been to reduce the area of derelict land in the Register of Vacant and Derelict Land. Given the boggy character of the site there was no good potential for development. Secondly, the site could potentially be contaminated due to dumping of industrial waste by a nearby chemical plant. Thirdly, woodland planting could have been motivated by a need within the deprived community for high quality greenspace.

Before planting, the site was predominantly covered with marshy grassland, scrub and bushes. There were several trees near the railway line, a small number of willows on the outskirts of a pond and an informal path network. Part of the site was a golf course until the 70's. According to local knowledge, Malls Mire has also been used as a gypsy travelling camp and to provide for temporary housing before woodland planting. Midway the 19th century, Malls Mire was partly woodland, before being felled towards the end of the 19th century.

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Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
1993 - 2009	Glasgow City Council & South Lanarkshire Council	Reduce area of derelict land; Provide high quality greenspace	Tree planting	Land Reform Act

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

Urban Roots actively attempts to promote community engagement. Up until this point, the woodland has been used to deliver a Forest Schools programme, bushcraft weekends, walking classes, guided tours, fungi forays, parents & toddler groups, and crafts events. The group also runs a weekly volunteering day, which is attended by a number of people, including people with additional support needs.

Woodland management has mainly focused on conservation of the woodland and improving access through clearing windblown trees, halo thinning to favour veteran trees of conservation value, removing shade tolerant non-native species, enrichment planting of woodland flower species and clearing rubbish. Furthermore, as part of the Prince of Wales Scheme for Disadvantaged Young People, work has been carried out by young delinquents on putting in a wooden path around a small pond on the site.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2007-2009	Glasgow City Council & South Lanarkshire Council (managed by TCV)	Improve access	Path clearance	Land Reform Act

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2009 -	Glasgow City Council & South Lanarkshire Council (managed by Urban Roots)	Improve access (path-related funding in accounts) Education and quality of life (Forest Schools programme, programme of events, Branching Out programme) Improve biodiversity	Woodland thinning, re-engineering and surfacing the path network [planned]	Land Reform Act
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Recently, Urban Roots has successfully applied to two grants that will cover woodland silvicultural thinning and improving the path network. This is perceived as a major milestone because it makes a significant contribution to the ecological and amenity stability of the site.

6. Future Plans

The group has secured funding for woodland thinning and is currently in the process of marking trees to be taken out within the near future. In addition, funding has been secured for the construction of a formal network of compacted gravel paths that complies with the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA). This will require some re-engineering of existing desire lines on steep slopes. Urban Roots also intends on improving access from the community garden to the woodland by thinning the woodland near the garden. Glasgow City Council in the process of declaring Malls Mire a Local Nature Reserve. A biodiversity survey is to be undertaken in May 2014 as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded activities.

In the future, Urban Roots would like to continue to focus many of its activities around community education due to high demand. It would like to continue with the Branching Out programme, which involves people with mental health problems in woodland management activities. Urban Roots, together with a number of other groups, also plans to put in a joint bid to Esmée Fairbairn Trust to develop a woodland gardening programme. The group aspire to look at harvesting timber from the site channelling any income generated back into the management of the site.

The group is planning to change its legal form to an SCIO within the near future.

3. Engagement and impacts timeline

Year	Event	ENGAGEMENT	Reasons (Barriers and challenges)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Social (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Woodland (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Financial /Economic (evidence)
2007	Volunteering in woodland	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	To improve the amenity value of urban greenspace.	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
2008	Toryglen Gardening Group dissolves into Urban Roots	ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To apply for grant funding for setting up woodland management and other activities.	Employment of two staff members (accounts)		Receipt of grant funding (accounts)
2012	Urban Roots signs a use agreement with Glasgow and South Lanarkshire Councils	GROUP FORMATION to DECISION MAKING	To apply for larger grants.	Education and involvement (programme of events)	Dumped rubbish cleaned up	Receipt of grant funding (accounts)

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2013	A large grant from HLF was secured	DECISION MAKING	To enable large scale silvicultural and a range of biodiversity improvements	Delivery of a range of different educational and therapeutic social programmes	Woodland thinning	Receipt of grant funding (accounts)
2013	A grant to the development of site access was received	DECISION MAKING	To improve site access	Improved accessibility [planned]	Improved path network [planned]	Receipt of grant funding (accounts)