

# Drumchapel Woodland Group

## Glasgow, Scotland



***Urban group that grew from litter clear-up to high profile urban woodland and was dissolved in 2009 because of volunteer overload***

# DRUMCHAPEL WOODLAND GROUP

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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](http://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: Drumchapel**  
**Map ref: NS 528 720**  
**Webpage: None**  
**Date of profile: May 2014**  
**Resources: In-person meeting with ex-committee member and founder, AND discussions with external supporter of group.**

<b>1. Institutional context (in 2009)</b>	
<b>1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)</b>	<p>The woodland is entirely owned by Glasgow City Council.</p> <p>The Drumchapel Woodland Group was active from 2007 to 2009.</p> <p><b>Classification of tenure: Informal agreement (public)</b></p>
<b>1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)</b>	<p>Access is granted to the public under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act (2003) which permits non-vehicular access in line with the Scottish outdoor Access Code. Access is encouraged and provided by an extensive path network.</p>
<b>1.3 Regulations/responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)</b>	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&amp;S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>Part of Drumchapel Woodland is ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The LNR designation has not placed any constraints on its management.</p>

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<b>2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise</b>	
<b>2.1 Group members, representation and decision making</b>	<p>There was no official membership of the group other than the committee members. No restrictions were placed on anyone wishing to take part in their activities or attending meetings.</p> <p>The community was predominantly a community of place. Initially the group felt it represented local people with a shared aim of improving the woodland area. At this stage the group consisted mainly of local people who lived near to the woodland and many of them knew each other. After winning a number of awards including Tim Stead Award, and because of the unique position of the group as Scotland's only official urban community woodland group, the group's media profile was raised significantly and this attracted attention from people who were less interested in managing the woodland. This compromised the legitimacy of the group and ultimately led to its end in 2009.</p> <p>Strategic decisions about the management of the woodland were agreed between the committee and local authority biodiversity officers. Decisions concerning the management of the woodland were discussed at monthly meetings in the group's offices with representatives from FCS Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Glasgow City Council natural environment unit. The committee also brought issues to the attention of the council who would direct resources to deal with them, such as removing fly-tipped waste.</p>
<b>2.2 Communication and learning processes</b>	<p>Open meetings were regularly held in the local community centre. A range of events both in the woodland and the community centre attracted people's attention and events were hosted in the woodland such as Halloween events and Easter egg hunts which were open to everyone. There was a strong commitment from the regular volunteer group who met weekly. They were also supported by local agencies including Glasgow Culture and Sport (now Glasgow Life) and the Drumchapel and West Glasgow Regeneration Agency.</p> <p>The group's popularity toward its end attracted a lot of press attention and the group found themselves regularly under the spotlight.</p> <p>The group did evolve in response to its popularity. This meant amending objectives, improving the opportunities it could offer to volunteers such as training, and expanding the group's remit to include education work with local</p>

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	<p>schools.</p> <p>As one of the first urban community woodland groups in Scotland, the group attracted a lot of press attention. They were also held in very high regard by councillors and politicians which brought more attention. This attention had a big impact on the evolution of the group.</p>
<p><b>2.3 Structure and legal status</b></p>	<p>The exact form of constitution is unknown (<i>'...just normal run of the mill constitution...'</i>). The group report that it did not place any restrictions on their activities. The objectives of the group were originally to tidy up the woodland to make it safe for use by the public as amenity woodland.</p> <p>The group was run entirely by volunteers and initially it used tools that were given by Glasgow City Council. Financial arrangements were minor at the beginning of the group. A treasurer managed the group's finances which grew substantially after a number of donations from local businesses and prize money.</p> <p>The group was formally constituted. Office bearers in the committee held responsibility for specific roles such as treasurer etc. The committee consisted entirely of volunteers and the group operated from an office provided for them in a community centre by Glasgow Culture and Sport.</p> <p>The objectives of the group were to clean up the woodland for the benefit of the local community.</p> <p><b>Classification of legal form: Unincorporated Association</b></p>
<p><b>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</b></p>	<p>Although the exact form of constitution used by the group is not clear, they report that it did not have any effect on the group's working.</p>
<p><b>2.5 Forest management</b></p>	<p>The management plan in place at the time was written by Glasgow City Council's biodiversity officers. After the group formed, the plan was updated and specific areas were identified which were suitable for the group to work</p>

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<b>objectives and planning procedures</b>	<p>on. Responsibility for the plan remained with the council. The plan was used to direct the efforts of the group's volunteers.</p> <p><b>Overall aim of plan: Public access and recreation</b></p>
<b>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</b>	The group did not employ anybody, all group members were voluntary. Silvicultural and access improvements were planned and an application to the Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT) Challenge Fund to improve access provision on the site and carry out silvicultural improvements was successful. The group was dissolved before the contract for this grant was signed.
<b>2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability</b>	<p>No charges were made for membership. All income was 100% grant aided or donations.</p> <p>No products or services were traded.</p>
<b>2.8 Benefit distribution rules</b>	The group did not trade any services or products.
<b>3. External linkages</b>	
<b>3.1 Partnerships and agreements</b>	The group worked closely with the local FCS community ranger, Glasgow City Council biodiversity officers and woodland unit as well as the Community Woodland Association. The FCS ranger initially helped the group to form and provided access to wider support and resources from FCS for instance, tree safety operations.
<b>3.2 Associations</b>	The group was a member of the Community Woodland Association.
<b>4. Resources</b>	
<b>4.1 Forest/ woodland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Size:</b> Total area (60.2 Ha) made up of Cleddans Burn (16.4 Ha), Garscadden Extension (20.3 Ha) &amp; Garscadden Wood (23.5 Ha).</li> <li>• <b>Location:</b> In the Glasgow suburb of Drumchapel on the north western edge of the city. Collectively these</li> </ul>

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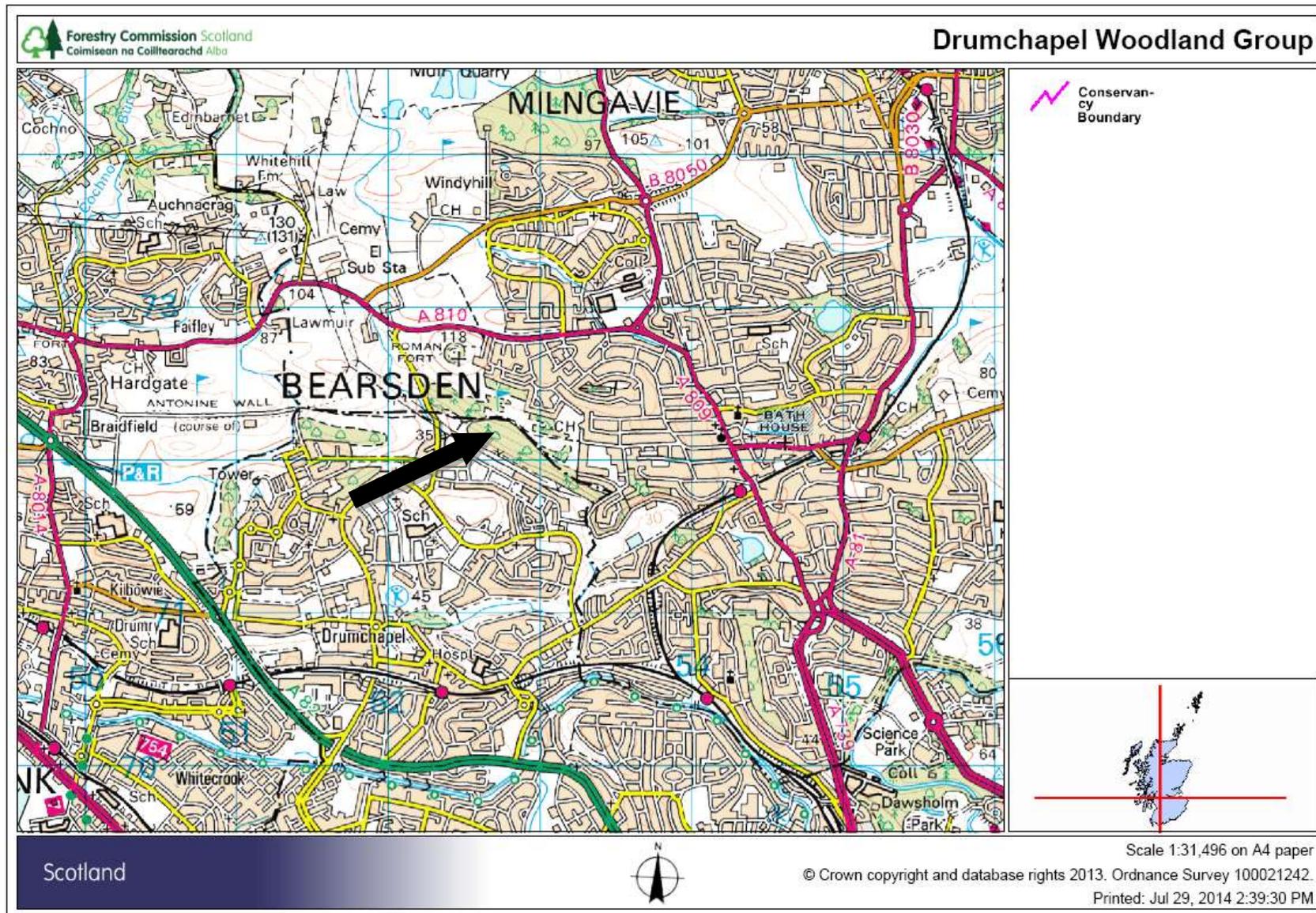
woods curve around the northern edge of Drumchapel, separating the residential housing estates of new Drumchapel from the predominantly agricultural land adjacent to the north, and the residential town and golf course of Bearsden to the northeast, and the A82 Great Western Road and Clydebank.

- **Access:** The woods are primarily accessed via a network of footpaths from several entrances. The footpath network is in a good condition and offers accessibility to a wide range of abilities. There is limited vehicular access.
- **Soil type and site potential:** The soils are deep, free draining and relatively fertile brown earths for the most part and with low DAMS the site is suitable for a wide variety of species.
- **Species mix:** Predominantly mixed broadleaf with some conifer woodland including ash, beech oak and sycamore. Conifer species include Scots pine, Norway spruce and Japanese larch.
- **Age of stands and major operations:** The majority of the area is 61+ years old forest with regenerating thicket in patches. The Garscadden extension is 11-20 years old.
- **Volume:** No data available
- **General mix of management compartments:** The woodland itself was not divided into management coupes at the time of the woodland group.
- **Features:** There is a significant volume of deadwood mostly within Garscadden Wood comprising of snags, windthrow and fallen deadwood. There is also the occasional veteran tree and stump. There are 3 ponds within the marsh area on the west side of Cleddans Burn. There is a significant area of open space with approx. 45% of the total area of the sites being open.
- **Classification of woodland type: Broadleaved**
- **Outline management history:** Cleddans Burn Wood and the Garscadden Extension are new mixed

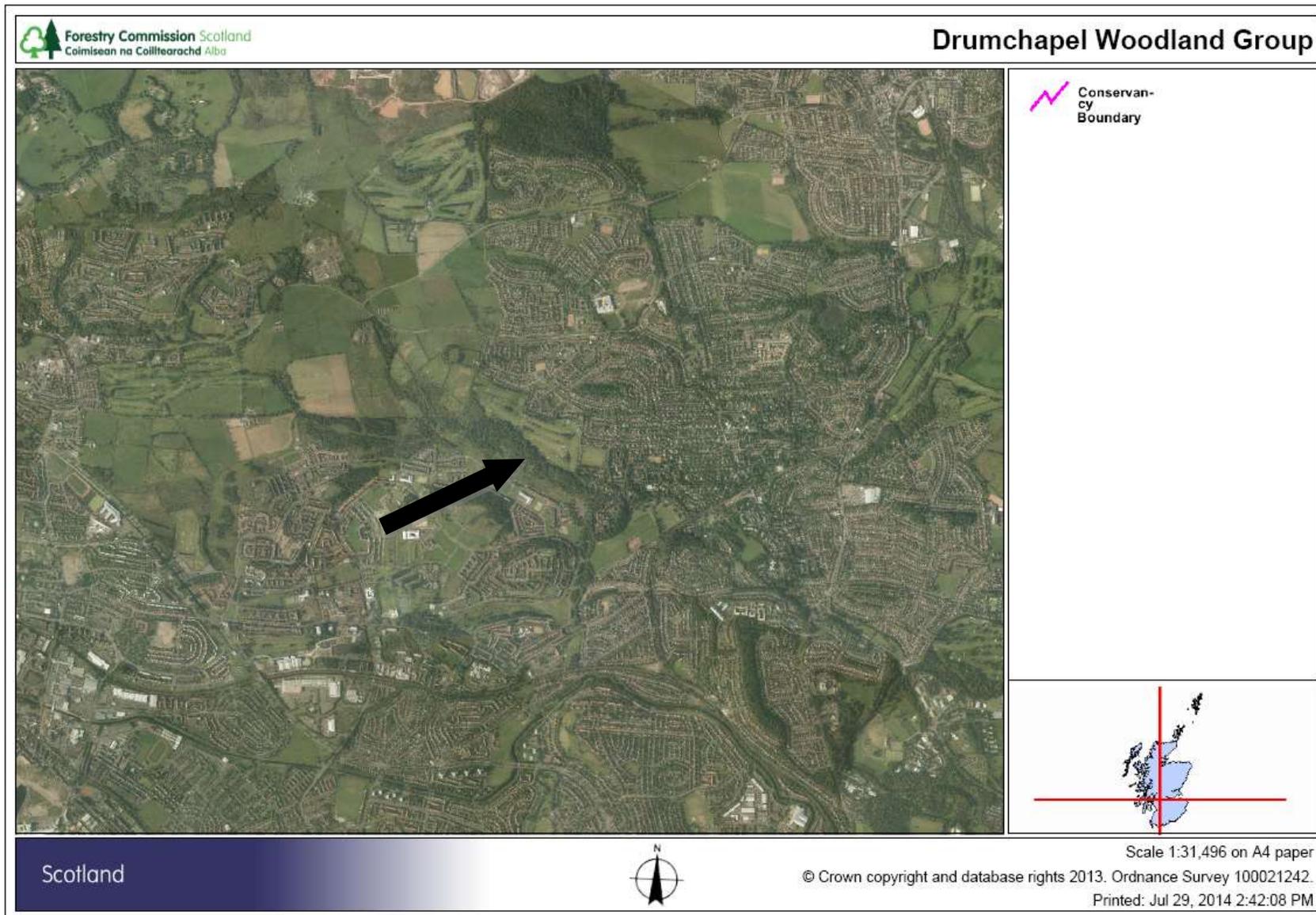
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	<p>woodlands planted from the early to late 1990's. Since their establishment other than some small scale pruning and coppicing no thinning or felling operations have taken place. Garscadden Wood is a much older woodland; once part of Garscadden Estate which had several previous owners before passing to the Colquhoun Family in 1665. There is documentary and physical evidence that the woodland was historically managed for oak and hazel coppice however no documented management objectives and policies are available until the 1990's when Central Scotland Countryside Trust produced a management plan for the wood covering 1990-1995. There are no records of what operations if any have taken place in the recent past.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biodiversity information:</b> Garscadden Wood was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2006. Much of Garscadden Wood is recognised as ancient woodland. Garscadden Wood and Cleddans Burn running alongside Cleddans Burn Wood are two of Glasgow City Council's 46 Sites (of City-wide) Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) due to their role in supporting habitats such as Mature Oak Woodland, Marsh, Unimproved Acid Grassland, Unimproved Neutral Grassland and species such as the Purple Hairstreak butterfly, Bluebells, Wood Anemone, Greater Butterfly Orchid and Long-stalked Yellow Sedge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2 Woodland and group funding sources</b></p>	<p>The woodland remained under ownership of Glasgow City Council.</p>
<p><b>4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital</b></p>	<p>Silvicultural / biodiversity expertise was mainly provided by Glasgow City Council. Volunteers within the group did undergo training in areas such as tool use and first aid.</p>

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## 2. Change Narrative

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

In 2007 two brothers and their two friends from the Drumchapel area in north Glasgow had a chance meeting with a FCS Community Ranger in their local woodland, Garscadden Woods (known locally as Bluebell Woods). Their discussion about the unhealthy condition of the ancient oak woodland, extensive fly tipping and litter inspired them to take action and work together to tidy up the area. During the following week, they removed over 500 bags of litter. (**active engagement to group formation**)

The group continued their work, with efforts primarily focussed on the removal of rubbish and, with the support of the ranger, the local authority was brought in to remove a number of burnt out cars. As things started to progress the group realised they needed more tools and volunteers if they were going to clear the whole woodland of rubbish. With support from the FCS community ranger, the group approached the Glasgow West Regeneration Agency which at the time was focussing a lot of support on regeneration projects in the Drumchapel area. The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of a six month training pilot project called the 'green-work mates' which was officially launched in June 2007 by the Scottish Environment minister Mike Russell. The promotion of the group by the Glasgow West Regeneration Agency and the high profile launch led to a growth in the group's popularity, helping to make links with new areas of the Drumchapel community, ensuring that work on tidying up the woodland could carry on at a much faster pace.

Following the group's success in Drumchapel, they were invited to get involved with another FCS site in Caron Valley, Stirlingshire (exact nature of work here is unknown) and subsequently with the building of a replica 12<sup>th</sup> century fort for the Clanranald Trust for Scotland, adjacent to the FCS site at Carron Valley. The group recall this to be a significant time in their evolution, where very close friendships were formed between members. They were also being asked to host events at their site in Drumchapel, including a tour of delegates from the first green exercise conference which resulted in a number of articles in local press and national journals. In July 2007 the group hosted the first *Treefest*, a family woodland event with live music in association with the FCS which also received a lot of media attention, including requests from the community for more events to

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be hosted by the group, in the woods. At the beginning of 2008 the group won the 'Clean Glasgow' award and subsequently decided to constitute formally. The exact form of constitution is not known (but it is assumed by the interviewee to be a charity). The group was advised on matters of constitution by the local FCS ranger. The constitution was amended as the group grew, to take account of their changing nature and the people it involved (the exact changes are not known).

The group held their first AGM in March 2008 and in April, were nominated for the Tim Stead Trophy for Community and Social Forestry which they won after visits from a panel of judges. Throughout this time the group reported that use of the woodland was increasing substantially, with school visits now a regular feature and a marked increase in people using the woods for recreation.

Following on from their success of winning the Tim Stead Award the group were involved with a number of different projects including events organised by the group and some partnerships with other agencies such as hosting 'Play Day', a children's event with Culture and Sport Glasgow (now Glasgow Life).

Throughout this time, the group met monthly with representatives of Glasgow City Council who gave support to carry out and plan woodland management activities and provided support with resources such as the removal of rubbish and the development of access provision. In addition to these meetings, there were quarterly meetings with Glasgow City Council Biodiversity Officers where strategic management planning for biodiversity issues was discussed.

Initially, word of mouth played a big part in attracting volunteers to the group. As they became well known within the wider community more people wanted to take part and join the volunteer group. At the same time, winning awards meant they gained a lot of attention and as one of the earliest urban woodland groups, they were used as an example of urban regeneration and community development by politicians, which meant they maintained a high media profile.

Engagement with the local community was mainly by events including: a weekly volunteer group who maintained the woodland, education visits with local schools, on-site seasonal events such as a Halloween lantern parade and children's Easter egg hunt, and green wood-working courses. Promotion of these events was mainly done with fliers and posters. The group received a high level of support from the Drumchapel regeneration agency and Glasgow Life to promote the events.

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The attention brought on by the group's elevated profile and status eventually led to internal disputes within the committee which centred around acknowledging the individual efforts of group members as well as managing a high level of interest in positions within the committee. Despite its size, the group only had a couple of key players, who received a great deal of support from the FCS Community Ranger and throughout its life all posts were staffed entirely on a voluntary basis. Expectations of the level of commitment from group members by external agencies which were heavily involved with developing and supporting the group (such as TCV, FCS, Glasgow West Regeneration Agency and some elements of Glasgow City Council) ultimately led to tensions between the group and the agencies. Tensions rose and eventually came to a head on the day of a large event when one of the founding members pulled out due to a family illness. This resulted in criticism from a partnership organisation in the event which was a turning point and within a week the committee met and dissolved. The collapse of the group was not only brought on by the fact that these key players were in such high demand, but because they had relied strongly on the ranger for support, so that when she moved on they struggled to function. At this stage, the work needed for funding applications, management plans and oversubscription to events and activities had become a problem. While the group had initially been set up to tidy up their local woodland, by 2009 their success meant there were expectations to maintain partnerships, host large events and carry out woodland management, some of which was beyond their means.

The group made the transition from **active engagement** to **group formation**. Some elements of the group's activities reached the **decision-making** stage, such as developing the woodland's social event calendar and although they were consulted on decision making about silvicultural and access issues, the group's lack of knowledge and expertise in these areas precluded them from fully taking decisions about the woodland.

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

### Facilitating Factors:

- **Support from the FCS community ranger** was initially instrumental in helping to establish the group. At this stage, the group advertised volunteer sessions to tidy up the woodland locally using fliers and posters in key community hubs, and much was done by word of mouth. As the group evolved, their engagement widened to **partnership projects** with other agencies including hosting TCV's local Green Gym group and co-hosting events with FCS and Glasgow West Regeneration agency.

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- They also **benefited from promotional support** by agencies such as Glasgow Culture and Sport (now called Glasgow Life) and Glasgow West Regeneration Agency. Agency support meant volunteers were being referred by a range of different initiatives which had started in Drumchapel for long-term unemployed.
- In addition, medical staff in local medical centres prescribed specific walks in the woods, and taking part in the volunteer group as treatment for patients with physical health problems. This helped to promote the positive health benefits of the woodland as well as demonstrating the value of the woodland to the community.
- Management of the site was supported by FCS and the local authority who **provided considerable support** with the removal of rubbish and burnt out cars. Support was also provided by Glasgow Council's Woodland Unit to carry out tree safety surveys and carry out works which fell within the responsibilities of the local authority's duty of care.

## Barriers:

- The expectations of people who wanted to be involved with the group, and limited capacity of the group to manage expectations led to difficulties within the committee.
- **The reputation and media attention** led to interest in the group from people who were not necessarily interested in the woodland. This came in the form of individuals who wanted to be part of the group as well as a number of financial donations from local businesses. Initially these funds were used to train volunteers in areas such as first aid or accredited vegetation management certificates, but this in turn **led to an increase** in the expectations of those who were both already involved and those who wanted to be involved, which was **not managed sufficiently** by the group.
- A deficit in knowledge about biodiversity management and silviculture also meant that the group found the management of the natural heritage challenging. Although they had initially received a high level of support from FCS and GCC, this **level of support could not be sustained**.
- Throughout their time with the group, the two founding members received a lot of support from the local FCS community ranger who helped to liaise with agencies to secure office space, helped with fundraising and administration of the group's events. In 2009 **this support came to an end** when the ranger left her post and was not replaced. This highlighted the extent to which the group had relied on the informal support of the FCS ranger which, when removed left them struggling to maintain the kind of work they had become accustomed to delivering. In particular, the expectations of other

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organisations that had used the Drumchapel woodland group and site for delivering events and programmes meant the group were unable to keep up with the demands placed on them.

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### **3. Evolution of income streams**

No information available

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

Drumchapel housing estate was created as part of the “big four” in the 1950s along with Castlemilk, Easterhouse and Greater Pollok. Initial plans were to re-house 3500 people in the Drumchapel area in 1000 new dwellings.

The scheme took off in 1961. The majority of the area now ranks within the top 5% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Within the woodland, there are remnants of what was a large private rural estate, including large avenue plantings, and parkland species which now line the edge of housing estates. The Drumchapel woodland group primarily worked on the Garscadden Wood East site. Prior to the group’s involvement with the site there was no management of the woodland. Some paths existed on site, which were installed when the urban expansion of Drumchapel area took place in the 1960s. The area also features roman archaeological remains including one of the few remaining sections of the Antonine Wall.

The woodland’s past uses are assumed to initially have been amenity when urban expansion reached the Drumchapel area in the 1960s, but due to a lack of woodland management and escalating social and economic deprivation in the area, it soon became known as a site where anti-social behaviour and serious crimes took place and it gained a negative reputation. The woodlands were commonly used for drinking dens and joy riding cars. No grants were ever secured for their management.

Prior to the group’s involvement with the site a management plan was in place but resources were not available for its implementation. The main silvicultural operations undertaken by the group were coppicing of hazel trees along the woodland edge, tree safety work along access routes (mainly facilitated by the local authority) and some tree planting to extend the

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woodland. Some larger trees were removed by the council's arboriculture team as part of their duty of care operations. These were mainly trees that were unsafe and near to access routes, some of which had been damaged by joy riding cars.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
Pre-1950	Private Estate	Private amenity / agriculture / sporting	Amenity for private estate	Private
1950 - 2007	Glasgow City Council	Public amenity	Installation of paths, linking with urbanisation of Drumchapel area in 1960s	
2007 - 2009	Glasgow City Council / Drumchapel Woodland Group	To tidy up the woodland.	Removal of rubbish, engagement with local community	

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

One of the main achievements of the group, and their initial purpose for forming was the removal of rubbish and burnt out cars from the woodland, making it a safer and tidier place for the community to enjoy. The volume of rubbish removed and their success in removing it helped to build capacity and improve confidence within the group. The majority of this work took place in the first year (2007 – 2008). It made a significant impact on how the site was perceived and ultimately led to an increased level of use by individuals and organisations in the community. Evidence for increased use is based on observations by group members.

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They also carried out a number of small-scale silvicultural operations on the site. These included coppicing some areas, some tree planting, and assistance in the removal of dangerous trees near to access routes. This work would not have been carried out without the group's involvement and it improved the site's safety as well as improving the provision for biodiversity.

In addition to clearing rubbish and silvicultural operations, the group also worked on upgrading paths, establishing new path routes, and clearing and maintaining the site's badly neglected drainage.

In 2009, the group did secure a substantial grant from FCS under the WIAT scheme. This was intended to pay for significant silvicultural work including an extension of the oak woodland, removal of invasive species in the ancient oak area, removal of dangerous trees and up to 4km of path upgrades. However, the group was dissolved before the contract for the grant was signed. Some new tree planting did take place in 2009 by the group although it is unclear how this was funded. An area of approximately 1ha was planted with oak in an attempt to extend the oak woodland area. However, many of the new trees that were planted were vandalised or stolen and have not since been replaced. There were a number of benefits from engaging with the wider community as a result of the press and media attention, for example they found themselves in receipt of financial donations from local businesses which were used to pay for training and tools.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
Up to 1960s	Private Estate			
1961-present	Glasgow City Council	Amenity	Some access installed as part of urbanisation of area	
2007 - 2009	Glasgow City Council/Drumchapel Woodland Group	Improve access, education and quality of life	Clearance of substantial quantities of rubbish, education visits events and increased community use	

## **6. Future Plans**

The group was dissolved in 2009 after ongoing internal and external disputes. However, the original founding members have recently expressed a desire to re-establish the group.

Drumchapel Woods is now leased from Glasgow City Council by FCS and forms part of a network of 'Commonwealth Woods'. It forms one of eleven woodland sites within the greater Glasgow area now leased by FCS as part of the wider re-positioning of the FCS estate and is used by FCS for the delivery of community programmes such as Branching Out and Forest School. The improvements originally planned under the WIAT works have since been delivered, but not by the Drumchapel Woodland group.

## 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)
April 2007	ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT to GROUP FORMATION	Formation of Woodland Group facilitated by FCS ranger	To tidy up the local woodland. Support by local authority facilitated by FCS ranger.	Increased use of woodland, education visits start	Tons of rubbish and burnt out cars removed from woodland	
June 2007		First official group established with the objective of improving Garscadden Woods	Funding and tools provided by Glasgow West Regeneration Agency	Local recognition of the group	Access, drainage and tree safety works carried out in Garscadden Wood	Funds secured for the group training and to buy tools (accounts)
March 2008	Official group constitution and first AGM	Advice for chosen constitution model facilitated by FCS community ranger	Choice of constitution model is facilitated by external support			Grants accessed by group (accounts)

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April 2008	Drumchapel Woodland Group win Tim Stead award for Social Forestry	Elevated profile of group, attention from local and national media	As one of the only formal urban community woodland groups in Scotland, they find it easy to be top of their category	The group becomes very well known and receives a lot of media attention	Garscadden Woods gain more attention and visitor numbers increase again	Prize money is used to buy tools and train group members
2009	Loss of support from FCS Community Ranger	Managing expectations both internally and externally become difficult	The work the group had become accustomed to delivering could not be sustained without external support. The committee meet and dissolve.		Volunteer group ceases, rubbish begins to build up on site	The WIAT grant which the group had won was not implemented / drawn down.