

LONRIGG COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

December 7th, 2018

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1. Introduction

This report has been compiled by Amanda Calvert and Neil Donaldson following the community consultation held at Strontian village hall on the 7th December 2018 from midday to 7:30pm. The aim being to gain an understanding of the views and opinions of the community with respect to the potential purchase of Longrigg Wood.

Prior to the meeting a broad range of previous consultation documents and reports were reviewed to establish common themes and aspirations.¹ These were then used for focus and as a basis for design of the event.

2. Design

The involvement of the community is key to establishing the potential for purchase and management of Longrigg. This event was designed as an open house, the setting was informal with multiple stations around the room where participants could view, discuss and leave notes about specific topics. Rotation was not time limited and was self-directed, participants were able to set their own pace and spend more time at stations which were of the greatest interest, importance or relevance to them. The event ran from lunch to tea-time with refreshments available to encourage as diverse an audience as possible. They were greeted on entry and were asked to sign in and if they were also happy to be contacted following the event for further discussion. Consultants and staff were available to answer any questions and discuss the topics around the room.

¹ Cadispa prioritisation Report, The Cadispa Trust, 2014

Sunart Community Action Plan, 2014

Visioning Workshop, July 2016

Longrigg Woodland – potential as a community woodland – Key findings from the Sunart Community Consultation, February 2017

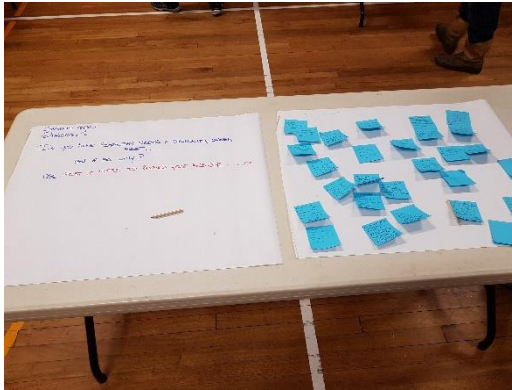
2.1 Station subjects

A different question was asked at each station:

1. Do you think Strontian needs a community owned forest, and if so why?
2. The ownership of a community forest brings with it many opportunities as well as potential risks: please list any risks or concerns you may have about the community ownership of a forest
3. What skills might you have that would help the community manage a community owned forest?
4. The Sunart Community Consultation, 2017 highlights apprenticeships, education, employment and training as essential issues: please list the strengths and weaknesses of developing skills/training/education in a community forest
 - Forest apprenticeships
 - Artisan skills
 - Rural skills training for school pupils
 - Forest schools
5. The Sunart Community Consultation, 2017 highlights employment and business development as essential issues: please list the strengths and weaknesses of the development of these businesses in a community owned forest:
 - Woodfuel
 - Woodchip for animal bedding
 - Bothy/camping
 - Timber milling
 - Furniture making
 - Other
6. If you had a community owned woodland what would you like to use it for?
7. How do you currently heat your home?
8. The children attending the event were asked what they like to do in woods?

3. Results

A total of 41 members of the community attended the event over the seven-hour period, representing 21.35% of the community as a whole².

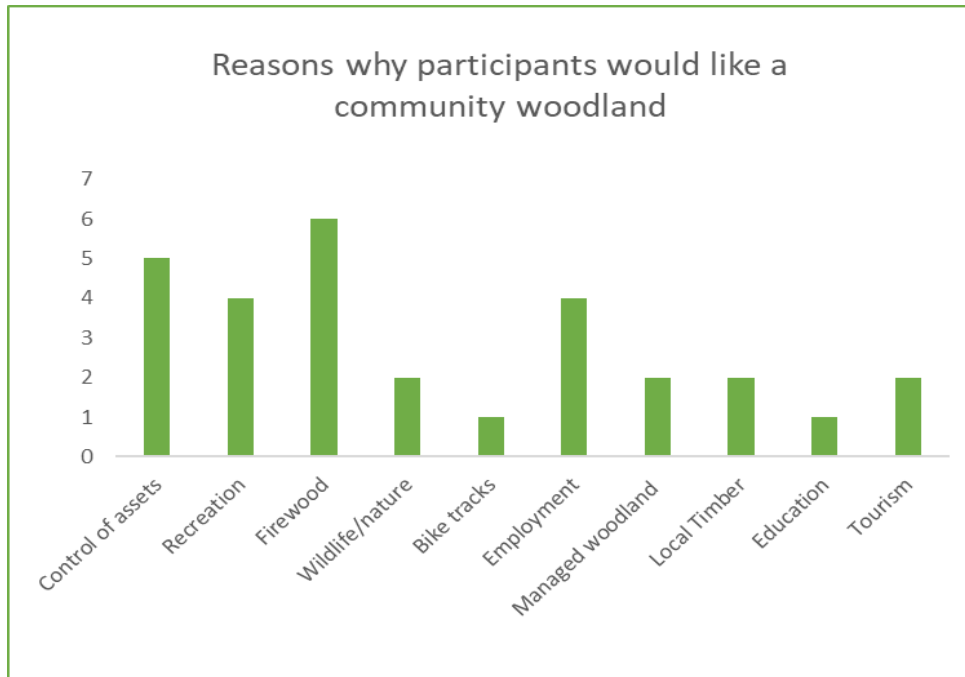


3.1 Do you think Strontian needs a community owned forest, and if so why?

There were 26 responses to this question, with fourteen in favour, nine not sure, one definite no and one other that felt that community funds might be better spent for a different purpose. The 'no' was related to Longrigg rather than an answer to the actual question, which asked generally about ownership of a community woodland. And one participant felt that the Forestry Commission should harvest the existing trees and then re-stock with hardwoods.

² NRS Small Area Population estimate (SAPE) derived Settlement Populations – Highland, 2016

3.1.1 Positive responses and the reasons



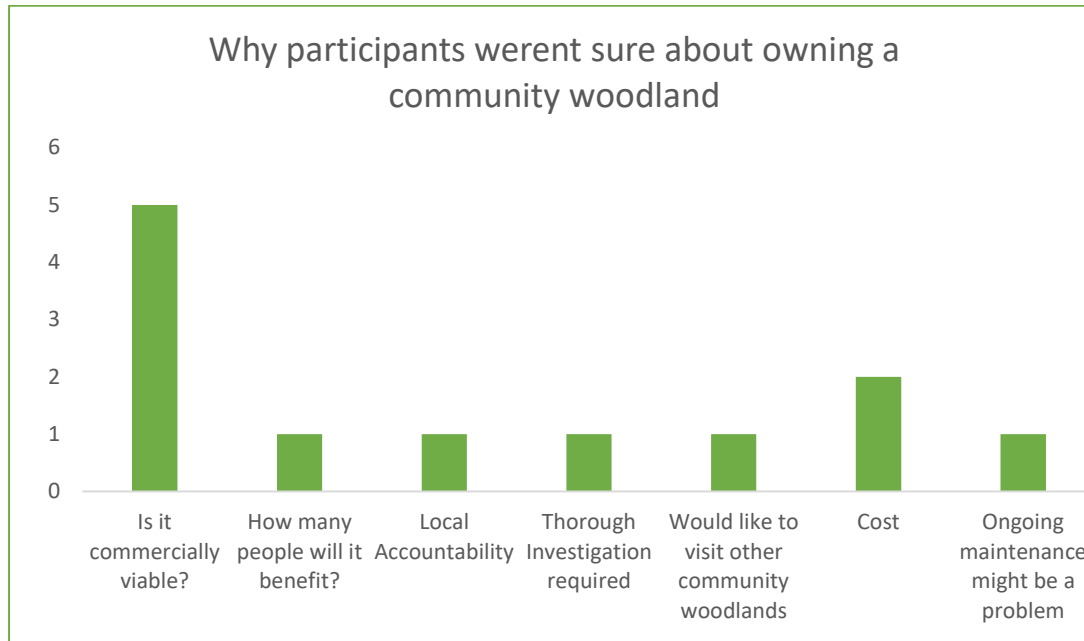
The main reasons the community stated for owning the wood are:

- Having control of local assets
- Recreation opportunities
- Access to firewood
- Employment opportunities

Figure 1 Chart illustrating the reasons why participants felt they would like to own a community woodland

Overall there were thirty-three positive comments, plus two that felt a community woodland was a good idea but stated specifically not necessarily Longrigg.

3.1.2. 'Not sure' responses and the reasons:



The main concerns the community expressed on ownership of the forest were:

- Is it commercially viable?

Cost and ongoing going maintenance was also a key concern

Figure 2 Chart illustrating the reasons why participants were not sure about owning a community woodland

The 'not sure' responses tended to contain a mix of positive and negative comments. Overall there were 12 'unsure' comments.

3.2 Risks or concerns about the community ownership of a forest

The responses to this were easily categorised into four main areas:

- Residents' concerns
- Legal issues
- Community capacity and management issues
- Financial and management issues

3.2.1 Resident's concerns

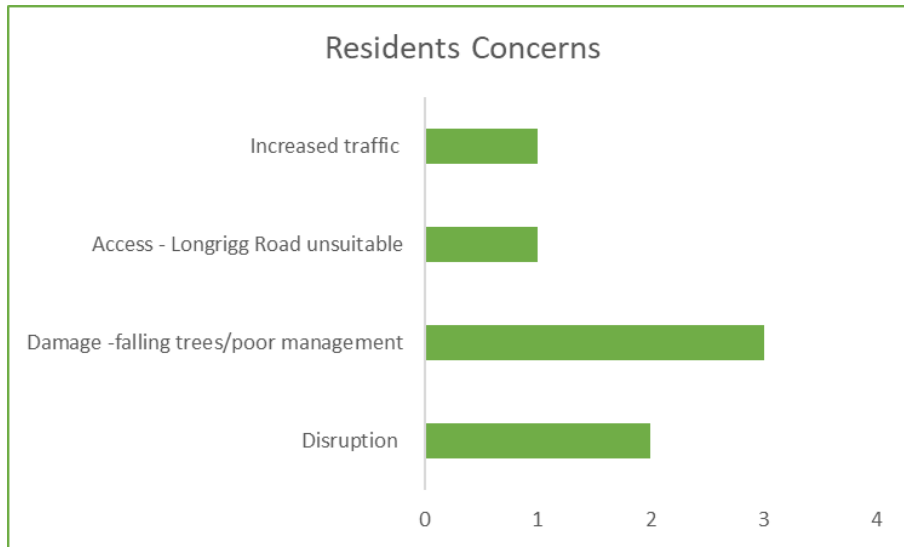


Figure 3 Chart illustrating residents' concerns

The responses relating to concerns were specifically related to Longrigg as opposed to generally owning a community woodland. There were seven comments, the most related to fear of damage from trees close to homes and the use of Longrigg Road for management operations.

3.2.2 Legal Issues

There were three comments highlighting concerns around legal issues, two about liabilities and insurance and one concerned with chainsaw injury caused by lack of training.

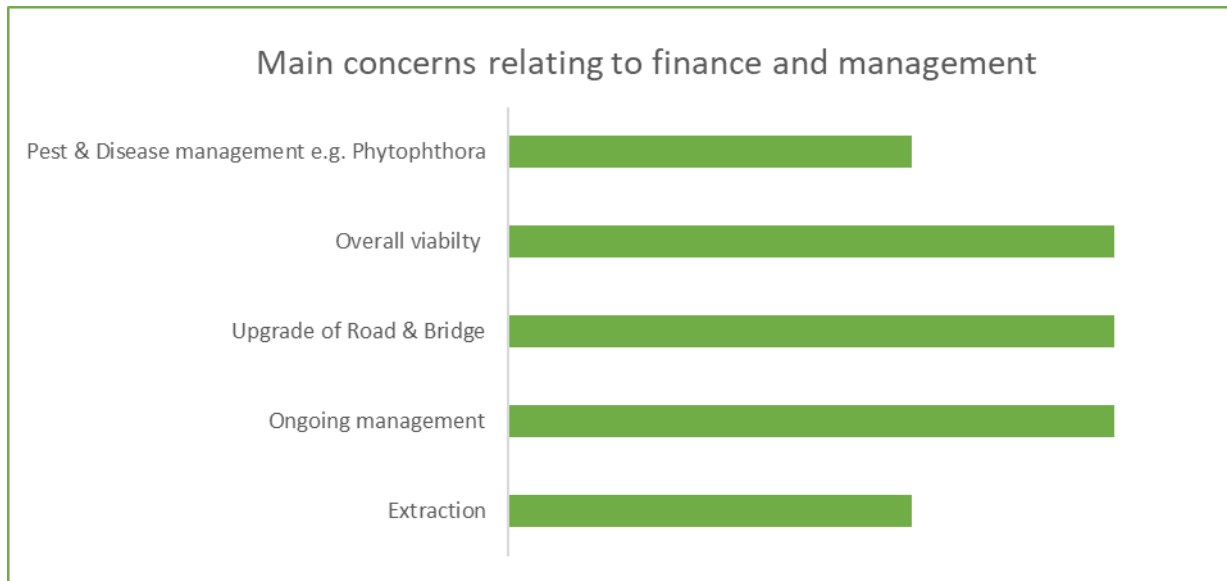
3.2.3 Community capacity and management issues

There were nine responses raising concerns about capacity and management. Four related specifically to capacity centring around who would manage it, particularly as many members of the community are already very busy with other projects.

Four were worried about sustainability, they felt there may be enthusiasm to start with, but this may wane over time, especially if reliant on volunteers.

The other worry related to 'buy in' from the community as a whole.

3.2.4 Financial and management issues



There were thirteen comments relating to financial and management concerns. The main worries about the overall financial viability of purchase and long-term management, and the cost of upgrading the local infrastructure to enable management. Two specifically concerned with *Phytophthora ramorum* and associated costs of any management action required.

Figure 4 Chart illustrating participants concerns about the cost of owning and managing a community woodland

3.3 What skills might you have that would help the community manage a community owned forest?

There were only a 2 responses to this question, one who used to work in forestry some time ago and another who used to be a Forest school leader before moving to Strontian

3.4 What are the strengths and weaknesses of skills, training and education opportunities presented by a community owned forest?

There were many comments responding to this question. The results are illustrated in the SWOT analysis below.

SKILLS TRAINING OR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
FOREST APPRENTICESHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers additional opportunities for locals (and schools) • A classroom could be linked to Forest Schools, community events and a health centre • More opportunities for locals to be trainers (upskilling) and from newcomers (younger people) • Great opportunity for young folk • Help to keep young folk in the area • Would help create employment • Scottish Government has funding for apprenticeships • Good opportunity on the high school's doorstep • It would be great if we could provide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding? • Short/medium/long term availability • Doubtful – nice idea • Low number of local people available. Is there a minimum? • Is one forest sufficient to provide the depth of training required for an apprenticeship

	<p>training locally, rather than young people having to move away to further their education/training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All apprenticeships are good, and every opportunity should be used to encourage more locally 	
ARTISAN SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have skills locally? If so would help develop skills and knowledge of young and old • Always a bonus in rural areas • How to set this up to use the skills already represented in the village • Tie in with Men's shed and furniture making and wood turners locally (x2) • Always required in local area • Encourage skilled people to move here with families • Agree with all these posts – great opportunity for the village • The more skilled workers we have, the more training and mentoring we can provide locally – plus economic benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this need a minimum number of people – low numbers of local population • Do we need to own a forest for this to happen? • Do we have the student numbers for any of these proposals to be viable in the long term?
SKILLS TRAINING OR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
RURAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR SCHOOL PUPILS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – academic or not • Valuable opportunity to provide vocational training to local and not so local youngsters (X 2) • Yes please • The wider range of rural skills offered the better. Good for artists too • Maybe set up an education trust to marry this with other CC projects. Not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will run this? • Is this training not available in Lochaber and we don't make use of it?

	<p>limit to just one! – More attractive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitely Yes. Particularly for those that want to lease the area • Great • Vocational training in manual skills for less academic (x2) • Great for local children. Educate at grassroot level re outdoors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Basic signs for naming trees *Willow structure etc for youngsters * Bushcraft skills • Tie in with Ariundle NNR? 	
FOREST SCHOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest schools and tourism • Wildlife nature walks • Health and well-being centre • A great interest for the area • Good idea • Great! • Great – could link up with other forest schools • Great! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access by schools. No children within walking distance of the wood. They would need to be bused in. It takes 30mins to walk over the hill • Not in right location for this. Forest School needs to be closer to the village • Location not the best for Forest School. A location closer to the village would be better

Figure 5 SWOT analysis skills, training and education

3.5 What are the employment and business opportunities presented through ownership of a community forest?

There were many comments responding to this question. The results are illustrated in the SWOT analysis below.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
WOODFUEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An asset to the community if we were able to buy logs etc • Would be great to buy locally sourced logs – no transport costs • Excellent idea • Easy accessible wood for local people. Way of generating income • Energy? • Yes – less mileage • If viable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of local people using wood for heating • Are skills available locally? • How accessible is the wood and therefore affordable to extract? • Sustainability? • Sustainability • Fire risk • Access • Extraction issues • Need to consider extraction in terms of vehicles along Longriggs Road • If forest needs to clear felled (?) Wood fuel would be a longer-term goal • Don't want people decimating trees for fuel
WOOD CHIP FOR ANIMAL BEDDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would tie in with a sawmill • Good idea – save transport costs • Yes – less mileage • Woodchip for animal bedding would be good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the chip to be transported out of the forest – access issues/costs? • Long term commitment • The number of animals requiring wood chip bedding locally would not sustain this • Commercial activity would bring more traffic to Longrigg
TREE NURSERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good idea for re generating natural woodland • Potential for local employment opportunities with all these • Good idea for employment and regenerating natural woodland • Good idea for employment – having 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of fencing to exclude deer • Cost involved

	trees available that grow in the local area	
BOTHY/CAMPING PODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds accommodation for increasing tourism • Potential for high end provision and facilities • If done well could provide employment and bring more tourists here • Good for tourism perhaps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not necessarily fitting with visitor demographic • Limited market • Management of remote facility • There is quite a lot already in the village – competition? • Already pods/bothies in the area. Would hate for this to take business from private businesses • Effect of these on wildlife already inhabiting the wood • Concern about wildlife, rubbish etc • Other than 6 week maximum/annum, extra accommodation is not required
TIMBER MILLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local timber is always good – less mileage and local employment • Sawmill – local employment? • Employment? • Possible source of employment • Wood be good to have locally milled timber • This would be a valuable resource – employment for someone local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not want large timber lorries going up and down already poor road •
FURNITURE MAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good idea – a chance to local people employment • Good to extract timber for furniture making • Excellent idea – particularly for the younger generation • Great asset for a rural community, woodland skills courses etc 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lovely idea for apprenticeships and employment • Link to men's shed – passing on skills to young people 	
OTHER IDEAS		
Mountain bike trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most likely for local people to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited external paying market • Insurance • Maintenance
Night sky destination/viewing hut		
OTHER COMMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about existing woodland already around Strontian? i.e. Phemies woodland owned by Forestry Commission. Could this not be bought by community and maintained? • Vehicular access to this woodland is not easy and potentially expensive • Much of the timber is windblown – so access within the plantation is also poor • All the suggestions for use and business opportunities depend of access – what are the viable options? • A key issue is making sure the existing trees near houses are safe. Take out nearest trees to house boundaries • With climate change local resilience is increasingly important. Using timber/woodland to support local community more important than ever – but most local forests have not provided that in the past 	

Figure 6 SWOT analysis illustrating the strengths and weaknesses of business opportunities presented by a community owned forest

3.6 If you had a community owned woodland what would you like to use it for?

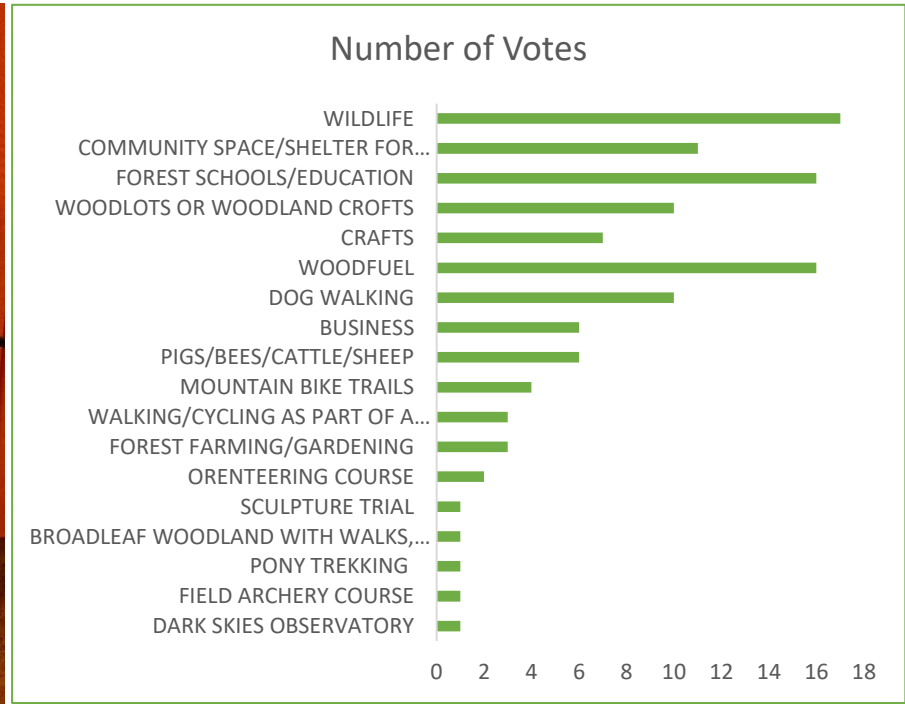
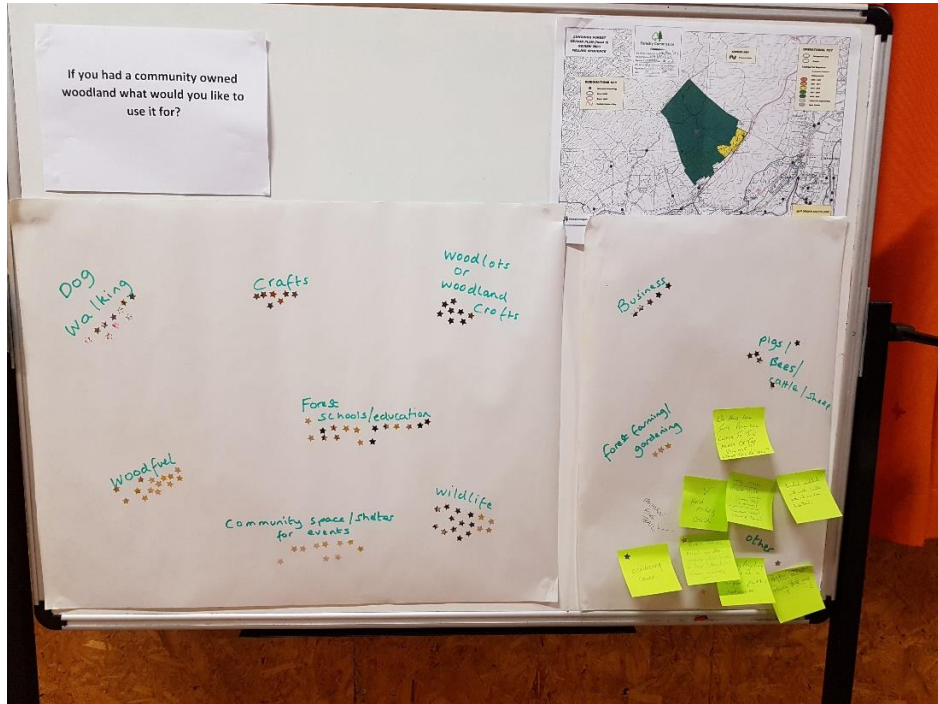


Figure 7 Chart illustrating the number of votes from participants for a range of activities that could take place in a community woodland

This question received a good response with a total of 116 votes for the various options. An additional eight ideas for use were added on top of the original 10 which were top options drawn from previous community consultations.

3.7 How do you currently heat your home?

This question was asked in order to establish whether there would be a need/potential requirement for woodfuel supply from a community woodland.

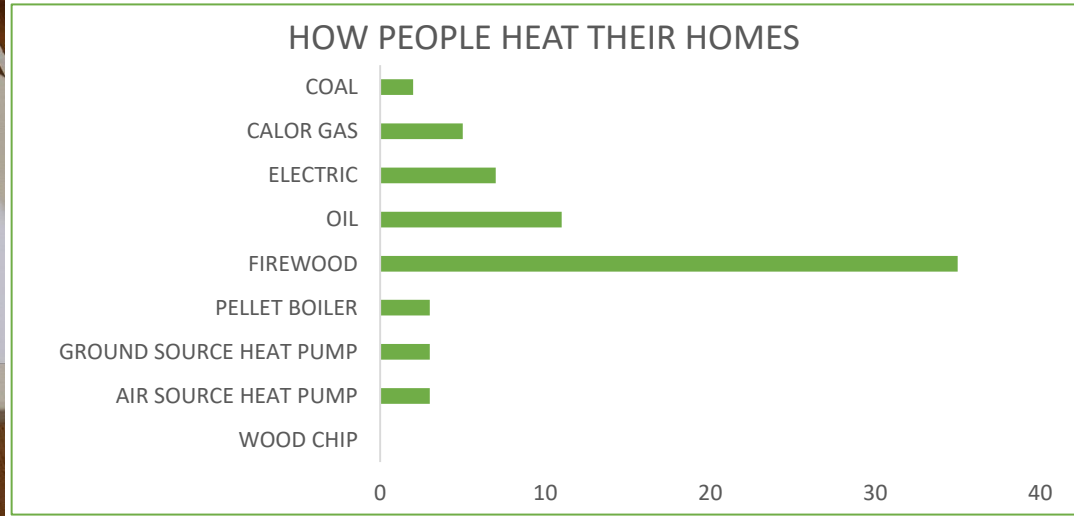
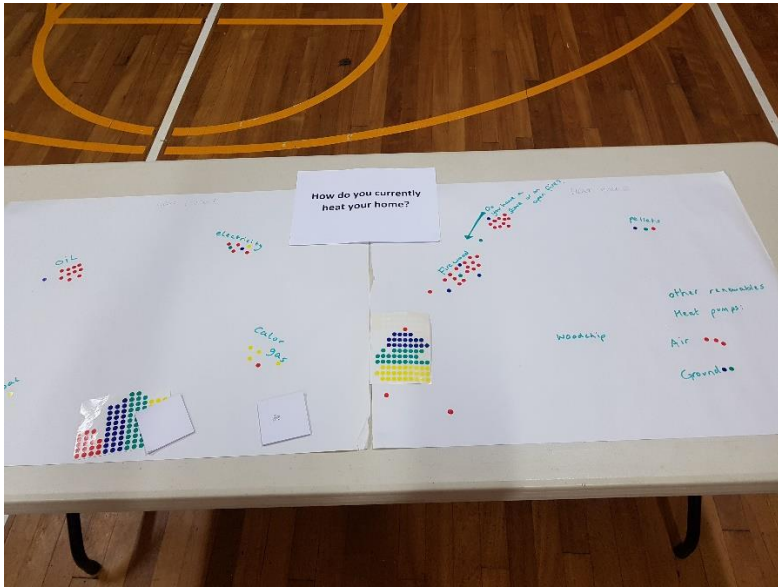


Figure 8 Chart illustrating how participants heat their homes

A large proportion of those heating their homes using woodfuel had wood burning stoves.

3.8 What did the children that attended the event like to do in woodland?

In addition to the adults nine children attended the event. We asked them to draw pictures of what they like to do in the woodland.

4. Conclusions

The consultation illustrated that the members of the community that attended were on the whole supportive of the idea of a community forest/woodland. Ideas for activities that could be carried out within a woodland largely followed previous consultations held within the community³. However, this was tempered by a range of perceived barriers and constraints, some related directly and specifically to the purchase of Longrigg Wood, others to community ownership of woodland generally.

Main barriers and constraints derived from the consultation as a whole:

- Capacity of the community to purchase and manage a community woodland is potentially limited (e.g. people, expertise and time, long term sustainability of activity/enthusiasm with a limited population)
- Access to and from the woodland for any management or any other activity is perceived as currently difficult (e.g. suitability of Longrigg Road)
- The impact of management on the residents of Longrigg Road (fear of perceived poor management, increased traffic)
- Financial risk (e.g. purchase, management and liability)
- Limited markets for products (e.g. woodfuel supply may be limited by existing population)
- There is only a small proportion of the community that have some experience of forestry related skills.

Main opportunities derived from the consultation:

- A community woodland would be an asset for the community providing a **venue/resource for a range of activities** highlighted in previous consultations
- The opportunity to keep more young people within the community (**potential work/business opportunities**)
- Potential for **skills and educational development** (forest schools, rural skills, craft workers)
- The community would have **control of local assets** (management of activity in Longrigg, control of impacts on residents on Longrigg Road, preventing unwelcome development)
- **Local supply of woodfuel**

³ Sunart Visioning report, Sunart Community Plan Appraisal (2014), Visioning workshop (2016), Longrigg Woodland Consultation (2017)

Although some members of the community appeared enthusiastic about the purchase of Longrigg woodland, there were a range of concerns raised along with requests for more detailed information on the woodland resource along with what would be the financial and management implications for the community.

Consultants have produced a Site survey report that provides information on the current forest resource and outline income and expenditure associated with commercial management.

Consultants have also produced a management option appraisal paper that provides a professional view on the respective strengths and weaknesses of the management options highlighted during the consultation.

Next stages

These 3 Interim Reports will be presented to Board along with those stakeholders who asked to be involved in this feasibility study.