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| Assessment Type: | Report | Duration/ word count: (if applicable) | 2 400 words | | | | |
| Learning Outcome/s: | <p>LO1 Assess different communities by recognising the different roles and principles required in community development.</p> <p>LO2 Evaluate current community development techniques when determining how to approach a community-based project in terms of planning, designing and engaging.</p> <p>LO3 Evaluate project management principles, people management concepts and leadership approaches when formulating community engagement projects.</p> | | | | | | |
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| By signing below you certify that the work submitted is your own work and was completed by yourself or an authorised reader/scribe: | | | | | | | |
| Signature: | SB | Date submitted: | 14/03/2024 | | | | |
| Result: | | | | | | | |
| Signature of Lecturer: | | Date: | | | | | |

Feedback to Student (Lecturer to provide a summary of feedback below, and/or note where the student will find the feedback/ further detail e.g. on attached sheet, on the assessment, in electronic form, etc.):

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GCW

Evaluation



Figure 1 - GCW (Source: <https://giffordcommunitywoodland.com/wildlife-2/>)

Scott Barclay [S30084519]

Date: 14/03/2024

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| GCW | Gifford Community Woodland |
| SLF | Scottish Land Fund |
| F&LS | Forestry and Land Scotland |
| NS | NatureScot |
| ELC | East Lothian Council |
| "The 2005 Act" | Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 |
| OSCR | Scottish Charity Regulator |
| Article(s) | Articles of Association |

Introduction

GCW is a 55-acre woodland to the West North-West of the village of Gifford, East Lothian (See Figure 2)

In 2017 the site was purchased by the GCLC (Ltd) from Lumsden Trust on behalf of the local community for a cost of £248,000, of which 5% had to be raised by the local community to show there was an appetite, which they managed to achieve quite easily. This then allowed access to further funding from the SLF to complete the purchase.

Aswell as the initial £248,000 for the purchase, a further £30,000 was required for the immediate short-term maintenance of the woodland as it had lay in a neglected state for over 30 years, particularly with dangerous trees and lack of, and over grown paths.

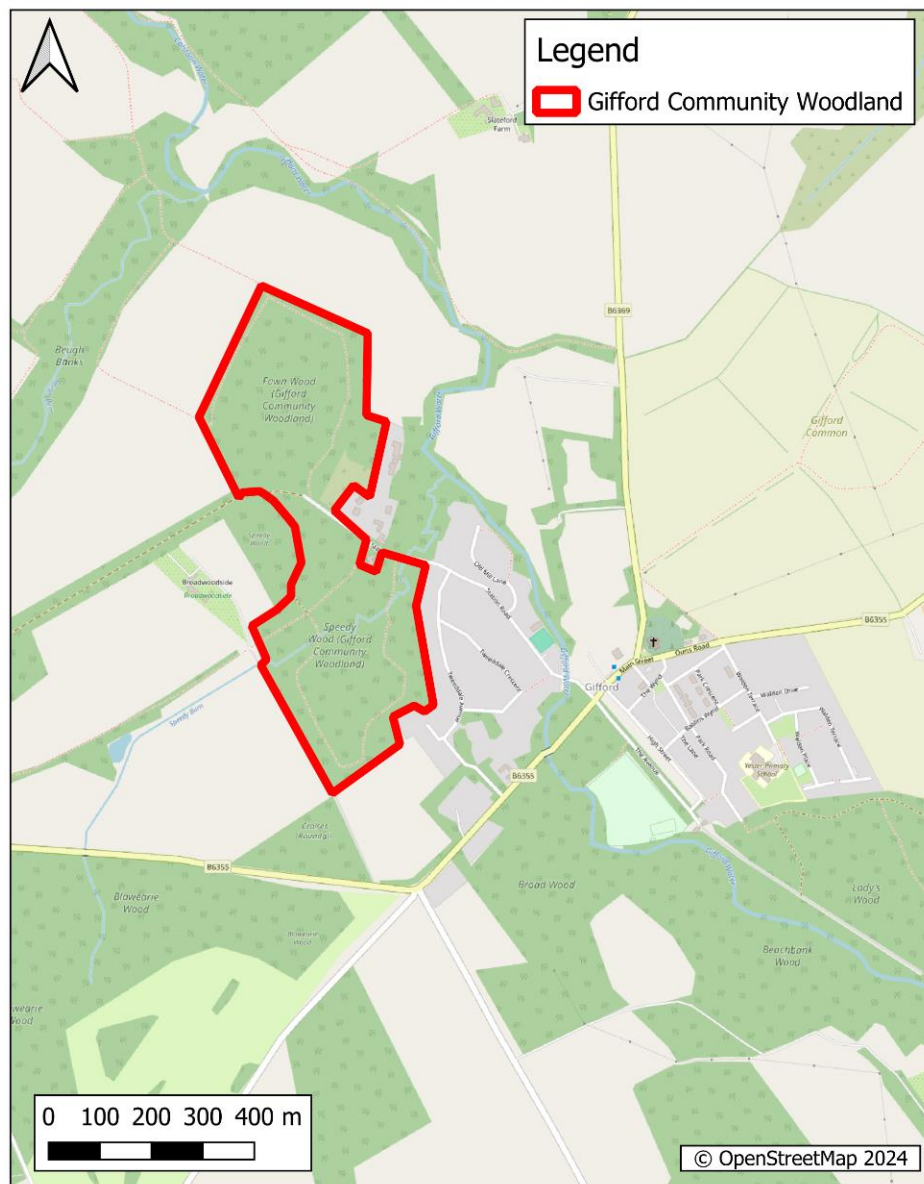


Figure 2 – GCW and Gifford Village

Community Development Roles

In a project such as the GCW there are internal and external stakeholders who can influence and either contribute to the success or demise of the project. Therefore, stakeholder analysis should be conducted with matrix created to identify all stakeholders and how they can influence project, see Table 1.

Table 1 - Stakeholder matrix. Green - internal stakeholders, grey - external stakeholders.

| Stakeholder | Impact | Influence | How can they support the project? | How can they affect or block the project? | How to engage? | Importance |
|-------------------------|--------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Staff | High | High | Being dedicated. Applying skillset. Educating others on the project. | By refusing to work (strike) or quitting the job. Working poorly. | In-formal and formal staff meetings and catch-up sessions. | High |
| Trustees | High | High | Being dedicated. Applying skillset. Educating others on the project. | By leaving the post or by influencing the project for their own personal gain. | In-formal and formal "board" meetings and catch-up sessions with stakeholders. | High |
| Volunteers | Medium | High | Being dedicated. Applying skillset. Educating others on the project. | By stopping the volunteer sessions and reducing time giving to project. | Catch-up sessions in-person and questionnaires. | High |
| "Friends of...." | Medium | High | Providing financial backing. Providing one unified voice. Educating others on the project. | By stopping funding, which is vital to the success of the project. By speaking out against Trustees. | Monthly/quarterly/annual in person/online meetings and Q&As. | High |
| F&LS | Low | High | Providing assistance such as best practices, licences and grants. | Ensuring all legislation is adhered too and everything is done under licence. | Engage with the local F&LS office via email and telephone. | High |
| NS | Low | Medium | Statutory consultee so can influence planning. Oversee legislation and provide advice with regards to Scotland's Nature. | Statutory consultee. Can recommend a project for refusal. Legislation can be a hindrance and costly (bat surveys). | Engage with NatureScot via email about any aspects of the project that may involve them and seek advice. | Medium |
| SEPA | Low | Medium | Statutory consultee for ELCand Scottish Ministers and can back a project. | Statutory consultee for ELCand Scottish Ministers and can recommend a | Engage with SEPA via email about any aspects of the project | Medium |

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| | | | Oversee legislation and provide advice with regards to Scotland's Environment. | project for refusal. Legislation can be a hindrance costly (i.e INNS chemical spraying). | that may involve them. Seek advice if from them if required. | |
| ELC | Medium | High | Provide grants and advice. Approve planning applications. | Refuse funds and planning applications. | Engage with local Biodiversity, Accessibility and Planning officers pro-actively. | High |
| Paths For All | Low | Medium | Providing grants and advice for accessible paths. | Refusing grants. | Engage with them through workshops and webinars and funding applications. | Low |
| Ranger Service | High | Medium | Back project publicly, work with the project with regards to wider issues (i.e INNS) | Refuse to back the project. Refuse any engagement with project leaders. | In-person catch-up meetings. Email with future project proposals to keep them informed. Listen to concerns. | Medium |
| Gifford Primary School | Low | Low | Offer to back the project publicly, potential to in-directly influence parents on it. | Could speak against the project publicly, potential to in-directly influence parents too. | Engage with kids, staff and parents to see how the woodland can be utilised by them. | Low |
| Neighbouring Landowners | High | High | May hold clout, can back the project and sway others, perhaps allowing access across their land to the woodland. | May hold clout, can speak against the project, perhaps blocking access across their land to the woodland. | In-person catch-up meetings. Email with future project proposals to keep them informed. Make it personal. Listen to concerns. | High |
| Neighbouring Houses | High | Medium | Can offer to support the project publicly. | Can unify and speak against the project. Can physically protest against it. Can complain to local authorities. | In-person catch-up meetings. Email with future project proposals to keep them informed. Make it personal. Listen to concerns. | Medium |
| Local Gifford Community (inc Community Council and users of the woodland) | High | High | Can offer to support the project, raise funds and assist with volunteering. Can offer services. | Can unify and speak against the project and physically protest against it. Can complain to local authorities. Can withhold funds and skills/services. | In-person catch-up meetings at local pub/centre/church. Online meetings. Email and updated social media platforms with future project proposals to keep them informed. Listen to concerns. | High |
| Wider East Lothian Community | Low | Low | Can offer to support the project. Can assist with volunteering. Can offer services. | Can unify and speak against the project. Can physically protest against it. Can | Email newsletters, local newspaper, website/social media. | Low |

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| (including users of the woodland) | | | | complain to local authorities. Can withhold skills/services. | | |
| Funders (Scottish Land Fund, Viridor, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Fellago Environment Fund, Local Fundraisers) | Low | High | Offer grants, which are absolutely vital to the project, without funding, particularly large grants, there is no Community Woodland. | Refuse any grants and access to funds. Can stipulate that funds are only to be used for a specific purpose. | Forge relationships with funds/grants officer. Do all due diligence and submit application forms correctly, demonstrating what previous funds have been used for and why this grant is required. | High |
| Commercial (i.e Buck & Birch) | High | Medium | Commercial agreements in place for Birch sap, provides guaranteed income meaning less reliance on grants. | Can stop purchasing Birch sap resulting in loss of income. Project may need scaled back. Grants may be needed to fill in gaps. | In-person meetings and tours. Email/telephone communication about anything that may harm production. Collaboration with company(s) about future of woodland. | High |

From the fieldtrip listening to Nev, and reading the Management Plan for 2021, it's very clear that GCW trustees and staff take Stakeholder Engagement very seriously. This has been demonstrated through "Stakeholder Engagement" in the Management Plan, overseen by an appointed board of directors and Steering Group. As well as this, they have also identified stakeholders in the Management Plan and explain how they have engaged with the stakeholders while committing to work with all stakeholders in future (GCW Trustees, 2021).

From the website they are also very transparent about paid staff, explaining their roles and responsibilities within the organisation as well as listing all Trustee's and their individual roles and what they bring to the organisation. Nev was also transparent on the field trip explaining that he is paid to oversee the management of woodland and that himself and Trustees identified that it would be a conflict of interest for Nev to sit on the board. Nev does however sit on the Community Council which is a fantastic way of bridging any gaps between the community and the woodland project (Kilkenny, 2024).

Community Development and Engagement Techniques

Under the “The Act 2005”, criteria need to be made to be eligible to be able to register as a charity (OSCR, n.d.) such as having to be registered with OSCR, which GCW did on 30/12/2016 before the April 2017 purchase of the woodland. They also registered with Companies House on 28/03/2006 (Companies House, 2006), for the potential purchase of a separate woodland which fell through. However, this allowed the GCW project to be “SCIO” which has the benefit being able to own property, incur debts, employ staff and allow members to have voting rights, while also offering protection against liability (OSCR, 2012).

From the discussion with Nev (2024) on the field trip, registering the company with Companies House prior to the registration of the charity with OSCR was a combination of luck and foresight as it made the processes easier. After the community consultation about the potential GCW, and after the community raising 5% of the purchase, as everything was registered and criteria met, they were now in a position to apply for the grant and to complete the purchase of the land.

Aswell as making the purchase more straightforward, being a SCIO allows members to have voting rights. For a community project this is vital as it’s very important to community democracy that they have a say on GCW.

Being a SCIO also allows them to have debts and enter into contracts and obligations, which could be vital to the survival and enhancement of GCW. For example, as Nev (2024) discussed as the woodland lay unmanaged for several years, or perhaps due to future storm damage, like the damage done by Storm Arwen, these may require immediate remediation or emergency works which could require debt to be able to complete. This may not be possible under a “Charitable trust” registration, again, proving it was good foresight and management for becoming a SCIO.

As well as the initial setup of the charity and company, as per “The Act 2005”, Charitable companies also have to submit financial records and accounts to OSCR and Companies House (UK Gov, 2005). It wasn’t discussed what system, if any, GCW use to manage this, but from reading the GCW 2022/23 Trustees Annual Report (GCLC, 2023) they have utilised the expertise of a local CFA Chartered finance worker who has independently examined and submitted the charities accounts.

GCW appears to be fully compliant with rules and regulations set out by OSCR and seems to be in a healthy financial position with £50,862 of unrestricted funds, proving this is a very well managed project (GCLC, 2023).

Despite the apparent ongoing success of GCW, it should be noted that there are still several challenges and risks associated to GCW and projects like this.

One of these risks highlighted on the visit to the woodland, is that according to Nev (2024), while some of the original Trustee’s had good intentions and wanted to do

their best for GCW, while other Trustees were abusing their power and using this as an opportunity from which they would directly benefit from.

This was a good observation and changes have been put in place to mitigate against this in future. As per the Article(s), one Trustee has to be appointed by the Gifford Community Council while at least 6 others have to be voted by Ordinary Members. On top of this, Trustees can serve no more than 2 Consecutive terms; however, it doesn't state how long a term is, which is something that should be rectified in the interest of transparency (GCLC, 2016). It should be noted that the Article(s) weren't readily available, and I had to email them for a copy. To Jill's credit, I received this the following day.

Project Management

Despite project management concepts not being discussed, from looking at the Management Plan 2021 its clear this project has a Clear Project Structure.

A hierarchy for decision making has been established with members getting a vote on certain things, with the Trustee's appearing to be organised into a sociocracy, coming to agreements and instructing and paying Nev on how to manage GWC and work to carry out. This is demonstrated through the "Open Woodland Meetings" where members get to speak to the Trustees about the plans put forward, while being given the opportunity to put forward their own ideas (GCW, n.d.). However, perhaps the organisation structure could be made clearer, like the Lauriston Agroecology Farm where its clearly mentioned on their website that they are a Community Interest Company organised as a Workers Co-Operative.

It's also clear GCW has a Communication Plan. As a small charity, they have great presence on social media and online via their website, which are constantly updated. On top of this there is digital newsletters and mail drops for certain community members and there is absolute transparency with everything they do, with all reports, facts and figures readily available online, including website and social media views/hits, which will assist with funding by showing how engaged the Gifford and wider community are with GCW.

Despite not being mentioned during the visit, it appears there is a strong Task Ownership plan. The Trustee's know their roles in community consultation as outlined above, then in decision making, while Nev knows his part in the actual management of GCW. This is confirmed in the Management Plan 2021 under their Long-Term Vision plans, Management Strategies and Proposals and Constraints and Opportunities (GCLC Trustees, 2021).

A project like GCW can only be as good as the project plan and objectives. With GCW, there's two projects ongoing simultaneously. The main project or objective "Manage the woodland to make the forest more resilient" is supported by another 9 "mini" projects or objectives that when completed, will help meet the main objective (GCW, n.d.-a). These objectives can be seen in several locations such as the website, Article(s), 2021 Management Plan and Trustee's Report, again showing the

project to be entirely open and transparent, while also holding the Trustees accountable.

At first glance, it would appear that GCW operates under a SMART Objectives concept. Looking at one of their aims “Eradicate rhododendrons from the woods” (GCW, n.d.-a), and seeing the progress from the Woodlands Report, the objective is Specific (eradicate it from the woodland), Measurable (2ha equivalent removed), Achievable (spraying and removal plan in place) and Relevant (Forest resiliency requires this). However, upon closer inspection, this objective, and every one of the other 8 “mini” objectives, aren’t Time-bound.

The main objective also doesn’t have any closing phase. Having done some volunteering with conservation charities similar to this, their aims and objectives also aren’t time-bound, so perhaps this could be standard for these types of charities due to the sheer amount of work and resources required. Using the Rhododendron removal example again, this requires trained chemical sprayers, dry weather conditions and manual labour for the removal due to lack of access for machinery, so perhaps it’s understandable this aim isn’t time-bound, or that the project doesn’t have a closing phase as its always evolving, it’s not static.

For nature conservation and management projects like the GCW that are always going to be moving and evolving, Project Management systems are needed. While it wasn’t disclosed on the field if any project management systems were used, it appears the Trustees operate under an AIGLE system. Originally designed for software management, core concepts of AIGLE are; breaking down projects into smaller cycles, which they have done as per the Woodland Report (GCLC, 2023), then allowing team members to work collaboratively and being able to adapt to changing requirements. This has also been demonstrated by utilising volunteers and adapting the project needs, like when H&S works had to be carried due to Storm Arwen.

Carrie Sanderson (Trustee) does have experience in Project Management but as the project grows, the Trustees might want to consider a proper Project Management approach, such as Wild Team’s “Project Management for Wildlife and Conservation v4” in conjunction with applications like Microsoft Project.

As well as good project management, the project also needs great people management skills and strong management and leadership skills. Utilising OECDs “criterion” RCEEIS, and from the field visit and wider reading on the GCW website, documents and social media, I get a feeling that they succeed with both of these.

From speaking to Nev (2024) they utilise the fantastic Lothian Conservation Volunteers and Conservation Volunteers as well as local individual volunteers who can provide a lot of labour (449 hours between Nov ’23 and Jan ’24) (GCLC Trustees, 2024) to GCW for a small fee (and sausages and coffee!). They also train volunteers using skilled professionals to continue doing some of the more skilled work which saves a lot of money (Kilkenny, 2024), while identifying sustainable commercial opportunities such as selling birch sap and firewood.

With some members raising concerns about this, it is vitally important income and the Trustees have managed to appease the local community while releasing funds from the woodland's natural resources.

One criticism of the management and leadership of the project is that nearly everything, such as knowledge, skillset, tools and storage is Nev's responsibility, and that if anything was to happen to Nev, the project could quickly fail. To mitigate against this would be to train someone else up with Nev's qualities and skills.

Conclusion

GCW has been a very successful project, demonstrated through the constant and transparent communication and continuing funding of GCW from grant givers and local community, as well as the constant work carried out by staff, Trustees and the volunteers.

However, despite the success of GCW, they may have to adapt slightly, such as training other staff members to Nev's level of skills and knowledge and consider utilising project management approaches and systems as GCW continues to grow and evolve.

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