

Community Engagement Modes and Outcomes

A suite of integrated activities have been undertaken over a period of more than 6 months. In some of the early activities, opinion was canvassed as Eshiels Woodland Group, and although the group has evolved into the PCT Eshiels Wood Sub-Committee the Eshiels Woodland Group has continued to be used in some of these activities to avoid confusion.

1. Modes of Engagement

1.1 Tweed Valley Wood Festival

This festival is held annually in Peebles, and attracts a large number of local residents and many people interested in wood and woodlands from around the Scottish Borders and the Lothians. A stall was taken to publicise our plans, maps printed for display, a leaflet was designed and 300 were printed for distribution. In particular people were invited to answer a short questionnaire:

- 1) Are you supportive of Eshiels Woodland transferring to community ownership from the Forestry Commission?
- 2) If a community buy-out were to be successful, what would you like to see the woodland used for?
- 3) If a community buy-out were to be successful, is there anything that you would NOT like to see the woodland used for?
- 4) We want to take account of local views, please select the closest area to where you live?
- 5) Do you want to keep in touch via our mailing list?

1.2 Promotional Leaflet

We designed a further leaflet and commissioned the printing of 1000 copies. These were distributed as follows:

- by hand to all the houses in the communities of Scotsmill, Kailzie and Eshiels which lie closest to Eshiels Wood;
- left in waterproof covers at both boundaries of the woodland on the Sustrans Tweed Valley Railway Path; these distribution sites were monitored and repeatedly re-stocked;
- provided to public places in Peebles

1.3 Facebook Group Engagement

We created a Facebook page and from that instigated a marketing promotion of the post with a link to our Survey Monkey questionnaire, using the same questions as in 1.1 together with a copy of text from the promotional leaflet. A total of £53 was spent in promoting the link to anybody living within 10km of Eshiels Wood for 10 days in November 2017, which includes both Peebles and Innerleithen, the major settlements in its vicinity. This promotion reached 3900 people as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Evidence of the reach of our Community Engagement.

Published	Post	Type	Targeting	Reach 
16/11/2017 13:19	 Exciting news, we've just heard our initial funding applicati			3.9K 
09/11/2017 13:29	 A couple of minutes to complete our short questionnaire w			38 
09/11/2017 13:09	 ESHIELS WOODLAND – WHY SHOULD IT BE A COMMU			6 
09/11/2017 12:51	 Eshiels Woodland Group			0 

1.4 Letters of Support

Letters of support were offered by Butterfly Conservation (PCT_4-1), both nationally and the regional branch (PCT_5-2), and (to date) Tweedgreen (PCT_5-3), Borders Forest Trust (PCT_5-4), and Borders Outdoor & Woodland Learning Group (PCT_5-5).

1.5 Peebles Life

An article about the project was included in the January edition of Peebles Life, a monthly magazine which is delivered to 5000 households in the Peebles area. This contained links to the Survey Monkey questionnaire and our contact details.

2. Responses to Engagement Survey

The stall at the Tweed Valley Wood Festival attracted a contact list of 56 individuals who wished to be kept informed of our progress. Twenty-six people filled in our questionnaire, all of whom were supporting a transfer of Eshiels Wood to community ownership.

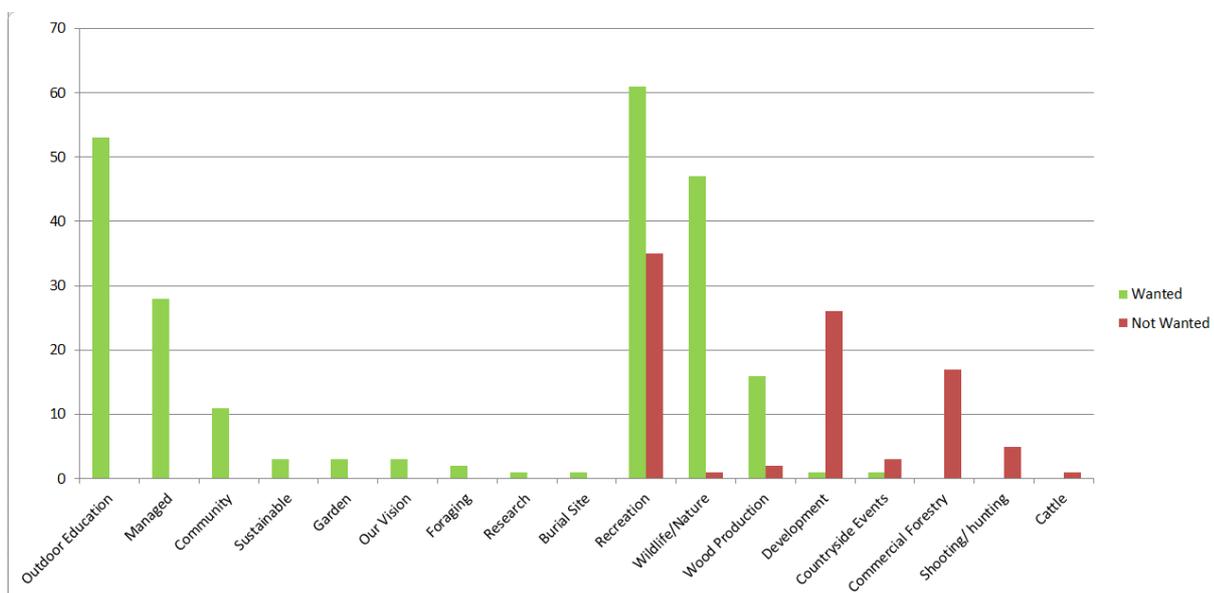
The activities pointing to the Survey Monkey questionnaire prompted a further 100 responses, and of these 99/100 were in favour of transfer to community ownership. It is notable that the one respondent not in favour had objectives for the wood closely aligned to our own (Q2, a nature reserve wanted; Q3, mountain biking not wanted). Of the 100 respondents 52 wished to be kept informed of our progress by email.

The geographical distribution of the total of 126 respondents to the questionnaire (both Wood Festival and Survey Monkey) is shown in Table 1. The distribution is not unexpected as Peebles is both the largest settlement and the closest of the major settlements. Broadly, the numbers of respondents from each settlement reflected their size and proximity to the woodland. Consequently we may assume our support is spread across the settlements in the area.

Table 1. Geographical Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

Peebles	69	Kailzie	1
Innerleithen	16	Scotsmill	0
Eshiels	7	Other EH45	2
Glentress	1	Other Scottish Borders	12
Cardrona	13	Other	3
Kirkburn	1	Unknown	1

Figure 2. Histogram of wanted and unwanted activities given by respondents to the questionnaire.



The activities described by respondents were classified into the 17 broad categories as shown in Figure 2. Among the 126 respondents a total of 231 'wanted' broad activities were mentioned and 90 'unwanted' ones, an average of 2.5 activities per respondent. Figure 2 shows a histogram of the wanted and unwanted activities in the woodland.

As Eshiels Wood is currently used primarily for recreation we were not surprised to see that feature highly in what was wanted by the community. The majority (22 of 35) of the votes against recreation were against cycling and although this cannot be stopped it will be discouraged within the woodland other than on the Tweed Valley Railway Path. Wildlife featured strongly, and we wonder if some respondents are not aware of the wide variety of wildlife already in the woods; this has prompted us to add information boards detailing what wildlife is there and what we are doing to encourage it. Outdoor education was also strongly voted for. Somewhat less expected was the strong support for managed woodland and for wood production. In essence this is exactly what our objectives are in this proposal creating a woodland that is can be accessed by the local communities, that is managed for coppice wood production, and which protects and enhances our biodiversity – which is of national importance.

3. Summary

- We employed different modes of engagement by displays at public events, leaflets, articles in the local press, and social media which had a reach in excess of 5,000 households through Peebles Life and 3,900 through Facebook. All these efforts were targeted on the 10 km area surrounding Eshiels Wood.
- The engagement has reached a range of stakeholders in Eshiels Wood far beyond the membership of our organisation: those interested in wood and woodlands, including visitors from the wider region; those using the Tweed Valley Railway Path; and local residents, with a special focus on those living in closest proximity to the woodland.
- The total number of respondents to our questionnaire was 126, and their location was strongly related to the size and proximity of communities to the woodland.
- Our engagement has shown near unanimous support or community ownership among the respondents to our questionnaire. A majority wished to be kept informed about our progress.
- The activities in the woodland favoured by the respondents to our questionnaire align very closely to our objectives set out in Section 4.1 of the CATS application form.
- To date have received 5 letters of support from 4 organisations. We anticipate more will follow.