



**Craielands Community Woodlands**  
**Feasibility Study**



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On behalf of

Craielands Community Woodlands (SC053132)

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## Executive summary

Craigiels Community Woodland (CCW) is a registered charity which formed in response to the proposed sale of Craigiels Wood (a c.32ha mixed woodland adjacent to the village of Beattock) by Forest & Land Scotland. The aspiration is for the community to own this woodland and rejuvenate its management for a range of environmental and social outcomes.

Crossbill Forestry was engaged by CCW to produce a feasibility study and business plan for community ownership of the woodland, which is intended to demonstrate viability over a 25-year period. Within this feasibility study we assess the potential for community ownership to deliver the community's aspirations, we analyse options for developing the wood, we consider national and regional policy context, we review funding availability, we cost the community's proposals, and we identify key risks and mitigations.

The aspirations of community ownership are to protect and improve community access to the woodland, enhance biodiversity, preserve the historic environment and provide educational and economic opportunities which boost the local forest industry. In doing so, the project is expected to create enhanced cohesion within the community of Beattock, by involving all sectors of society in its development and ongoing management.

This study considers the aspirations of the community woodland to be well aligned with national and regional policy. Several items of primary legislation and national strategies have laid the groundwork for greater community ownership of assets and encourage the involvement of communities in sustainable woodland management. Locally, the adopted local plan and the regional Forest & Woodland Strategy are emphatically supportive of community involvement in woodland management.

Consultation with the local community and key stakeholders proved to be a strong endorsement of the potential community woodland. 100% of respondents to a community survey were supportive of the idea of a community woodland project for Beattock, and 82% were interested in becoming involved. Support in principle has been given by the community council and local authority, and strong letters of support have been received from key stakeholders. No potential negative impacts of the project have been identified, and no consultees have raised concerns about the proposal.

This study has assessed the woodland composition and considered in detail the potential costs and liabilities of its ongoing management. This has revealed no major cost liabilities (beyond routine woodland management costs) and demonstrated the potential to fund initial project implementation through substantial timber revenue and grant funding.

Opportunities to use the woodland to achieve the project's aspirations have been considered in the context of the woodland composition, the skills and experience of the project team, stakeholder support, and outline cash flow projections. This review has concluded that the aspirations of the community woodland are both realistic and proportional.

The decision making and scoring criteria of key evaluation panels and funding bodies have been reviewed in detail, and the potential project is expected to perform well against these. Finally, an analysis of major risks has shown that appropriate mitigations can reduce these to acceptable levels.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project overview

Craigiels Community Woodlands (CCW) is a registered charity which formed in response to an intent to sell notice posted on Craigiels Wood, a 35.17ha mixed woodland property immediately adjacent to the village of Beattock, in the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish. The aspiration is for the community to own this woodland and rejuvenate its management for a range of environmental and social outcomes.

Consultation with the local community and key stakeholders has revealed wide ranging support for this concept, and a large number of willing volunteers who are keen to become involved.

The CCW board has recently been awarded Stage 1 Development funding from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), in order to commission a feasibility study, business plan and management plan to explore the viability of the project.

## 1.2 Feasibility study remit

Crossbill Forestry has been engaged by CCW (registered charity SC053132) to produce a feasibility study and business plan for community ownership and management of Craigiels Woodland. This will demonstrate viability over a 25-year period, and project detailed income and expenditure over the first five years.

With this study as a whole, we aim to identify:

- Opportunities to enhance community cohesion.
- Opportunities to develop inclusive public access.
- Opportunities to preserve and enhance wildlife habitats.
- Opportunities to preserve and raise awareness of the historic environment.
- Opportunities for education provision and rural skills development.

The feasibility study component is intended to:

- Assess the potential for community ownership of Craigiels Woodland to deliver the community's aspirations.
- Analyse options for developing the wood, suggesting appropriate activities and projects.
- Consider national and regional policy context.
- Review funding availability for the proposed activities and projects.
- Identify and quantify revenue generation opportunities and estimate ongoing running costs.

- Identify the risks associated with community ownership and ongoing management, as well as recommended mitigation.
- Consider the feasibility of the project in the context of the above findings.

### 1.3 Key outcomes of community ownership

For residents of Beattock, a key aspiration (and the first priority) of community ownership is to improve and protect recreational access to the woodland. Over time, inclusive access has been gradually eroded through the closures of old roads and paths, and this has recently been exacerbated by storm damage and felling operations. The community woodland aims to open up the woodland to the community once again, with a network of waymarked paths, seats and information boards.

In addition, there is strong community support for managing the woodland with wildlife conservation as a key objective. In particular, it is recognised that there are opportunities to participate in red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) protection, develop butterfly glades, and encourage the spread of woodland flowers.

Community ownership of the woodland will also create opportunities for education provision. Specifically, there are aspirations to:

- Conduct forest walks for school-age children, introducing sustainable forest management and woodland wildlife, and educate young people on the forestry sector through experiential learning.
- Hold bird watching events.
- Conduct wildlife identification walks.
- Promote local participation in monitoring environmental changes.
- Host woodland management courses, such as firewood processing courses.

Community ownership will create opportunities for local enterprises to support volunteers with the maintenance of the woodland and sustainably produce woodland products such as:

- Firewood.
- Sawlogs.
- Sawn timber.
- Bark chips.
- Beekeeping products.

Community ownership will give the community control over ongoing operations, and there is an aspiration to practise low impact management wherever possible. This will include harvesting of only small-scale blocks, encouragement of natural regeneration (where appropriate), and provision of a variety of wildlife habitats.

Finally, community ownership is expected to create enhanced cohesion within the community of Beattock and the wider parish, through shared enthusiasm for the woodland and participation in woodland activities.



## 2. Background

### 2.1 Beattock

#### 2.1.1 Local / administrative context

Beattock is a village in Dumfries and Galloway which is situated approximately 3km southwest of Moffat and 31km north of Dumfries. The village is immediately adjacent to the west coast main line railway and A74(M) motorway; it is less than 1km by road to junction 15. The local planning authority is Dumfries and Galloway council.



Figure 1: Map showing Beattock in regional context.

#### 2.1.2 Demographics

Beattock is the main population centre within the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish. Scotland's census in 2022<sup>1</sup> recorded the population within the wider parish as 854, with the village itself accommodating between 500 and 600. Amongst these 854 people, there was an even age distribution between the ages of 0 and 80, and the proportion of each 20-year age group (0-19, 20-39 etc) was close to the national average.

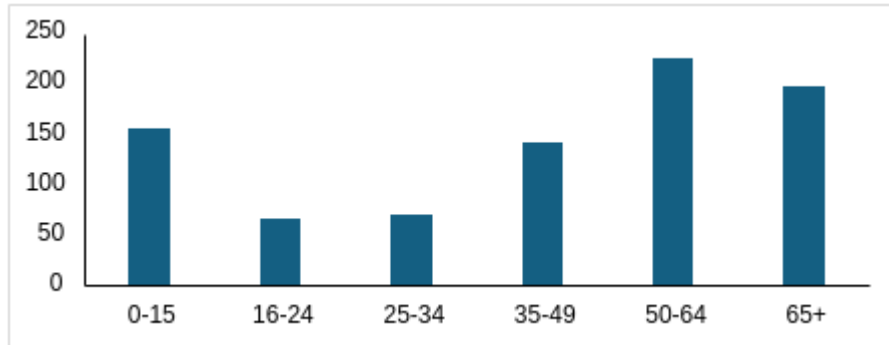


Figure 2: Chart showing population of the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish by age group from the most recent census data (2022).

The prevailing ethnic group within the parish in 2022 was White Scottish, accounting for 69% of the population, followed by White Other British (26%). The remaining 5% comprises individuals from other white, African, African Scottish, Asian, Asian Scottish or mixed ethnic groups.

Out of 837 people aged 3 and over, 800 speak, read and write English. Of the remaining 37, 26 understand or speak English, but cannot read English. This 3% of the local population can easily be inadvertently excluded from community projects and should be considered during future outreach activities.

### 2.1.3 History

Beattock was constructed in the 1800s when the nearby railway was under construction, however the surrounding area was settled much earlier. The site of the parish church, Kirkpatrick-Juxta dates back to 1174 (it has since been rebuilt), and Roman fortifications have been discovered nearby.

The surrounding area is thought to have been of strategic importance from the Iron Age through to mediaeval times, as evidenced by the abundance of archaeological sites including ancient forts. Its strategic importance was once again recognised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a clandestine underground bunker was established in Craigiels Woodland during World War Two.

The nearby historic town of Moffat became a popular spa town in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which later brought railway travellers from all over Britain through Beattock railway station. The poet, Robert Burns was a regular visitor to Moffat during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and had many connections to the local area. The station eventually closed in 1972.

Prior to the construction of the A74(M), the A74 Glasgow to Carlisle Road passed through the village.

#### 2.1.4 Economy, facilities and amenities

When the 2011 census was carried out, 70% of people aged 16 to 74 were classed as economically active, this is close to the national average of 69% and the Dumfries and Galloway average of 67%. The census also indicated that many residents travel at least 20km to attend work. Within the village itself there are a number of small businesses, including two holiday parks, several guest houses and a jeweller.

The village also contains several commercial compounds, including the headquarters of a haulage firm, a fencing contractor, a blacksmith, and a large timber harvesting company.

In terms of facilities, Beattock contains a primary school, a children's playground, a household waste recycling centre and a community village hall. The village has one pub and restaurant. Other facilities and amenities are available in nearby Moffat (a 5-minute drive, or a 50-minute walk), including a medical practice, a small supermarket, a range of shops and a secondary school.

#### 2.1.5 Transport

Situated just off the A74(M), Beattock has relatively good transport links by road. It is 5 minutes by car to Moffat, 30 minutes to Dumfries and 1 hour to the centre of Glasgow. However, of the 382 households in the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish, 62 have no car or van, and in a further 107 households, one car or van is shared between two or more people aged 17 or over. A proportion of the population is therefore dependent on public transport and pedestrian travel to access facilities and amenities.

The X74 bus service provides a direct transport link to Glasgow or Dumfries, and several local services also connect Beattock with Moffat and Lockerbie. Travel by rail has not been straightforward since the closure of Beattock station, and residents must first travel to Lockerbie by bus (a 38-minute journey).

#### 2.1.6 Outdoor recreation

Within the village there is a small recreational field and children's play area, which was funded by D&G council and more recently upgraded with grant funding by the Kirkpatrick-Juxta Community Council (KJCC).

In terms of walking trails, options are limited from the village itself. One core path is immediately accessible from the village, which follows the route of the Southern Upland Way and Annandale Way along the 'Crooked Road'. This offers views out onto the Moffat Hills, but it is a steep climb, is not circular, and for the first few kilometres it follows a road which is not closed to traffic.

Moffat provides more options in terms of marked trails, with a number of core paths accessible from the town, a community woodland on Gallow Hill, and a community nature reserve. However, Beattock residents must first either drive or walk several kilometres in order to access these.

For mountain bikers and gravel bikers, the ‘Crooked Road’ route provides access to an extensive network of forest roads in the Forest of Ae. For road cyclists, National Cycle Route 74, running between Carlisle and Glasgow, passes by Beattock on the A701, and provides long distance cycling options on relatively quiet roads and dedicated cycle paths.

### 2.1.7 Tourism

Despite being a small village, Beattock and the surrounding area attracts a relatively high number of visitors each year. The village itself intersects three popular long distance walking routes: the Southern Upland Way, the Romans and Reivers Route and the Annandale Way, all of which pass close to the northern boundary of the potential community woodland.

The Southern Upland Way is particularly popular, attracting an estimated 80,000 visitors per year, with approximately 1,000 completing the full coast-to-coast route. Beattock is a popular overnight stop location both for those traversing the full route and those exploring some of the most scenic sections through the Moffat Hills.

Beattock is also an extremely convenient overnighting location for long-distance travellers using the A74(M). Situated less than a kilometre from junction 15, this attracts additional visitors.

There are a number of accommodation providers in Beattock (at the time of writing, 10 are available to book via TripAdvisor), including several self-catering cottages, a large manor house (sleeping up to 26) and two holiday parks. All of these are situated less than a mile from the potential community woodland. Moffat Manor Holiday Park is the closest, backing onto the woodland directly, and providing easy access to walking routes.

Past research strongly indicates that visitors are attracted to Dumfries and Galloway for its natural beauty. Out of the annual average of 5.7 million day trips to Dumfries and Galloway (between 2016 and 2018), over 1.3 million were for a short walk (up to 2 miles), sightseeing on foot, or to watch wildlife. A further 700,000 were motivated by a long walk (over 2 miles) or to visit a historic site.

## **2.2 Craigiels Woodland**

A detailed review of the composition of Craigiels Woodland was carried out as part of this feasibility study. This began with a desk-based study and was followed up by a full walkover of the property, including timber measurement within marketable coupes.

### 2.2.1 Past management

Historically, the property which is now Craigiellands Woodland would have formed part of a wider Craigiellands Estate, which included many of the residential properties which are now adjacent to the property boundary. The woodland was planted and managed as a mixed woodland, seemingly with timber production as an objective. Situated on the eastern slopes of Craigiellandshill, at the western edge of Annandale, the woodland is visible from Beattock, parts of Moffat, and from the A74(M) motorway.

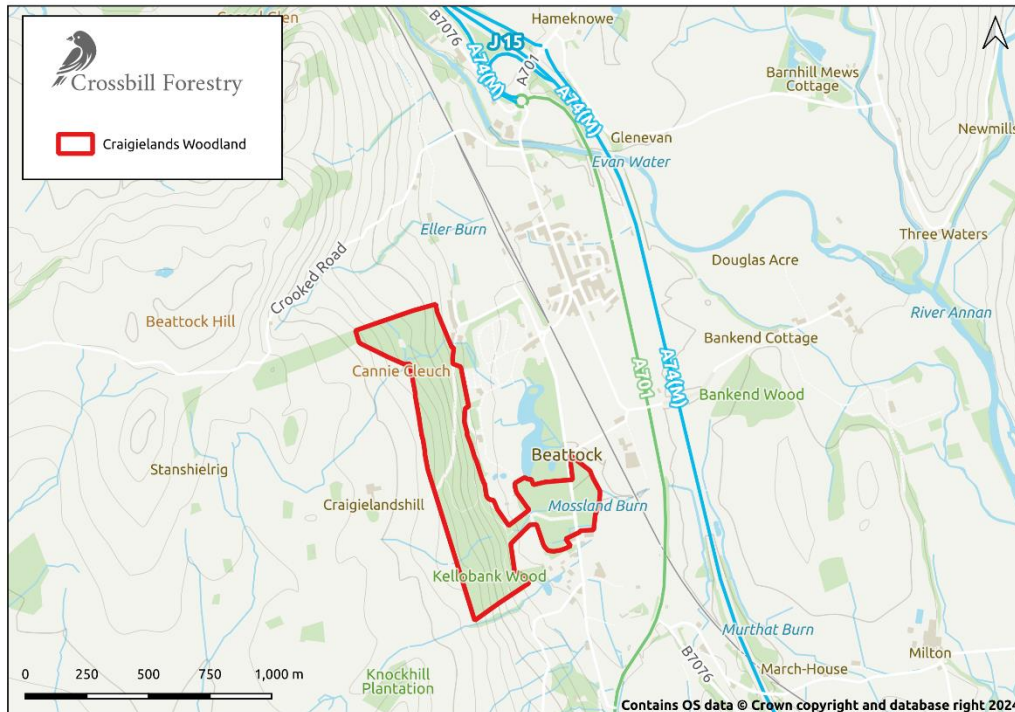


Figure 3: Map showing the extent of the property, in local context.

Parts of the property were first purchased as freehold by Forest & Land Scotland (then the Forestry Commission) in 1952, followed by additional adjoining areas in 1957 and 1960 and the property has been continuously managed as part of the National Forest Estate since then. The earliest recorded planting year in FLS's sub-compartment database is 1953. However, the Ordnance Survey map for the area from 1900 indicates that much of the property was already an established mixed woodland prior to public ownership.

This map also shows that the area to the east of the public road, and the area marked as a "Curling Pond" (now mature Norway spruce stands) were afforested by the Forestry Commission post-acquisition.



Figure 4: An Ordnance Survey map showing Craigielands, c. 1900.

This staggered sale to the Forestry Commission, followed by further dispositions, excambions and agreements whilst under FC management, has created a complex legal history for the property including a total of 15 legal burdens on the title deeds. These include private water supplies to numerous properties, and several rights of access. Professional legal advice will be sought on potential liabilities associated with these.

Formerly, a significant proportion of the property was occupied by Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*), which was felled in 2020 under a statutory plant health notice. In many areas, the larch was in intimate mixture with other species and these other species have mostly been retained, leaving a sparse overstorey in some areas and bare ground in others. Re-planting of the more open ex-larch sites has either not been carried out or has failed to take. In some areas, natural regeneration is occurring and is beginning to successfully capture the site. Other areas remain bare of trees and would benefit from re-planting.

Felling operations have created ground disturbance and left harvesting residues behind, which in some areas have obstructed established walking routes. Shortly after felling concluded, in 2021, Storm Arwen and subsequent storms caused extensive wind damage to retained trees, which caused further obstructions to public access.



### 2.2.2 Current composition

The current composition of Craigiels Woodland is diverse, containing a range of coniferous and broadleaf species and a significant proportion of open ground. The property is loosely shaped like a capital “L”, and the long edge of this “L” was previously primarily occupied by larch in mixture with broadleaves and Douglas fir, in varying proportions.

Now that the larch has been felled, stocking density along the main face varies from being almost closed canopy, to having very sporadic mature trees, depending on the proportion of trees which were removed under SPHN. Across most of this face, species are in intimate mixture, excepting several small single species blocks comprising sycamore, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir.

Along the short edge of the “L”, to the east of the main face, are two pure stands of sycamore (P1961), a strip of white willow (P2003) and two pure stands of Norway spruce (P1959/1961), which are described in more detail in section 2.2.11.

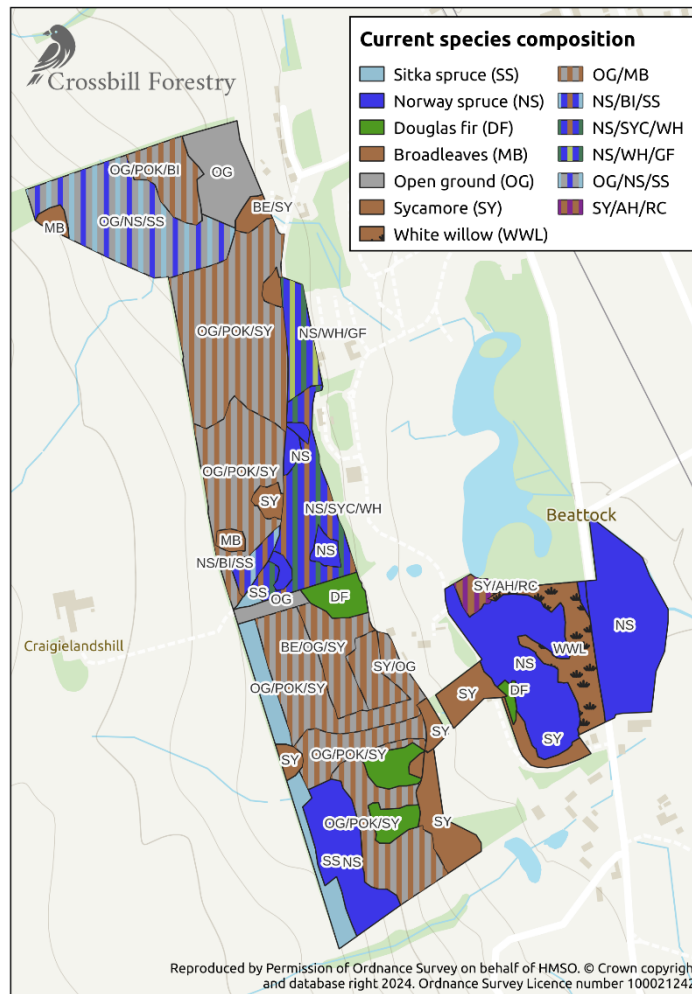


Figure 5: Map showing current species composition.

2.2.3 Neighbouring land use

Of Cragielands' c.4.5km boundary, nearly 3km borders farmland used for livestock grazing, approximately 1.25km borders residential/commercial properties, and 0.25km borders other forestry.

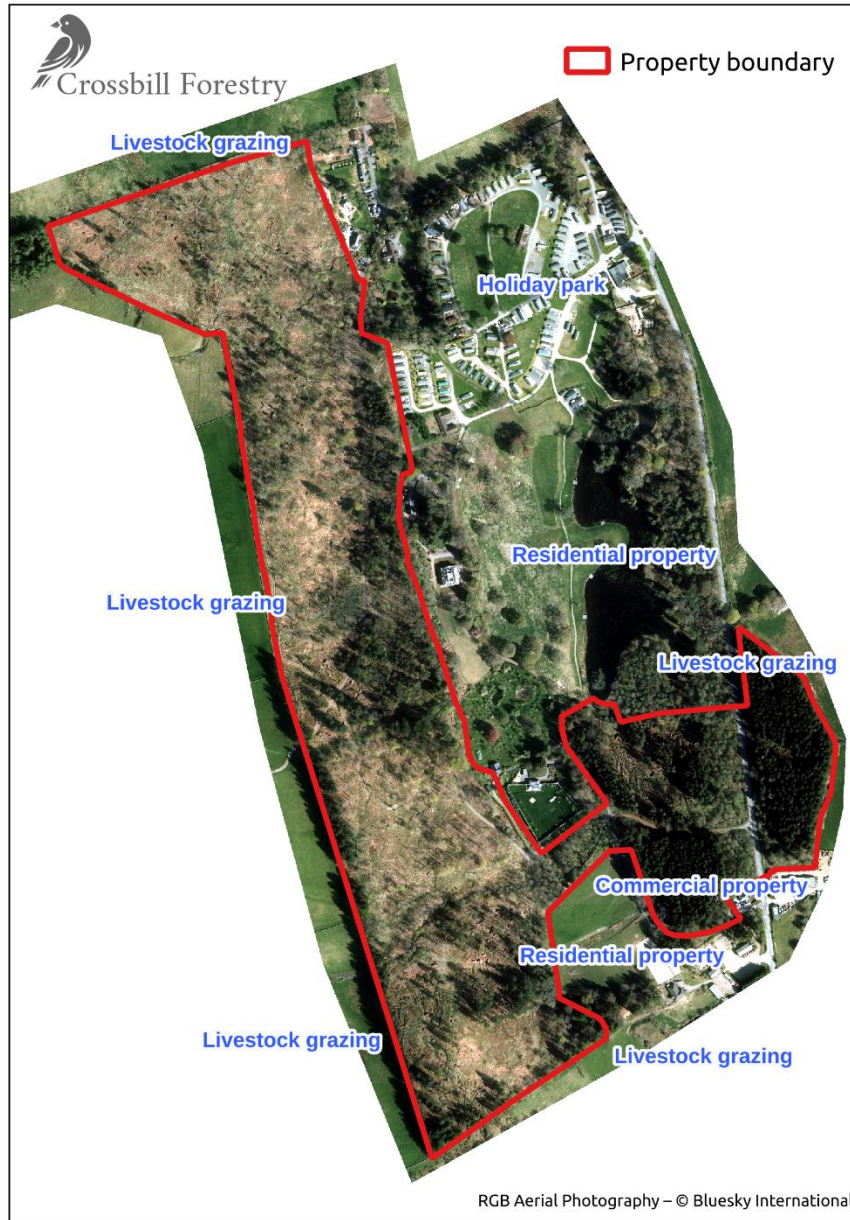


Figure 6: Recent aerial imagery (2022) showing adjacent land use.



#### 2.2.4 Archaeology

Craigielands Woodland contains significant archaeological interest. Canmore<sup>2</sup> lists five features within the forest itself, and six more within the grounds of adjacent properties. Four of these six proximal features are listed buildings which historically, would have formed part of Craigielands Estate.

Within the woods, features of interest include a grotto, an icehouse, a boat house, two cairns, and an underground second world war bunker. This bunker, which has been well known to locals for many years, was officially mapped in 2020 during felling operations<sup>3</sup>. It is thought to have been an operational base for an Auxiliary Unit (a secret branch of the Home Guard). The precise location of the bunker has not been made public due to safety concerns. Its ongoing management from a health and safety perspective would need to be carefully considered by CCW. FLS installed bat boxes in the bunker following its discovery in 2020.

#### 2.2.5 Environmental designations

There are no SSSIs or SACs within, or immediately adjacent to the property boundary, nor any other significant environmental designations. The ancient woodland inventory classifies much of the forest as semi-natural woodland which is “long-established (of plantation origin)”.

#### 2.2.6 Biodiversity

Biodiversity records for the forest from the National Biodiversity Network indicate high levels of floristic diversity, as well as significant red squirrel populations and occasional sightings of grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*). The forest is also used by birds of prey, including buzzards (*Buteo buteo*).



Figure 7: Signs of squirrel feeding were observed on site visits.

Ancient woodland characteristics are abundant throughout Craigiels, despite its designation as “of plantation origin”. Bluebell (*Hyacinthides non-scripta*), dog violet (*Viola riviniana*), wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*), lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*) and hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*) were all observed on site visits. Many of these species are relatively unusual in southern Scotland, and sensitive management of areas where they are present will help ensure their survival and expansion.



Figure 8: Common dog violet and lesser celandine were observed on site visits.



*Rhododendron ponticum* and - to a lesser extent - cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) could pose a threat to this floristic diversity. Through garden escapes, these species are now present in many areas, and left unmanaged may begin to dominate the understorey and smother the rich ground flora.



Figure 9: *Rhododendron incursion* threatens the floristic diversity of many areas, including Kellobank Linn, which has provided a refuge for several locally scarce woodland species.

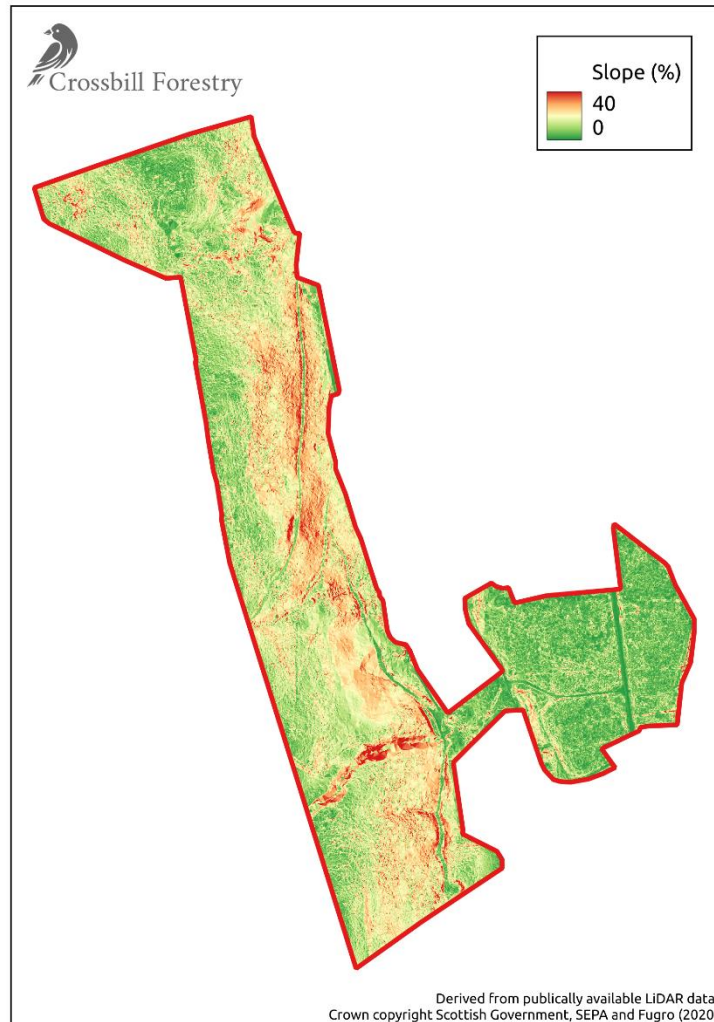
Similarly, on open slopes, where planting has failed to capture the site following sanitation felling of larch, vernal woodland plants now must compete with more light demanding species including bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). Whilst these species offer their own ecological value, the encouragement of natural regeneration and re-planting would create a more balanced woodland in terms of canopy closure and help to enhance floristic diversity.



*Figure 10: Bracken and bramble now dominate some areas opened up during SPHN larch felling.*

### 2.2.7 Topography

The forest ranges in elevation from 100m to 190m above mean sea level. The majority of slopes have an easterly aspect, and are steep in places, reaching 30-40% gradients on the lower slopes of the main face. At the top of the main face, slopes level off, gently sloping to the east at gradients of less than 10%. At the northern end of the forest, slope and aspect are more variable.



*Figure 11: Analysis of LiDAR data (published by SEPA) provides a detailed picture of slope steepness.*

### 2.2.8 Hydrology

A number of minor watercourses cross the property - including the Kellobank Burn and several unnamed burns - which eventually discharge into the River Annan. This section of the River Annan (Threewaterfoot to Annan) has been classified as being in “Moderate” condition since 2022. This was an improvement on its 2014-2020 classification, during which time it was in “Poor” condition.



### 2.2.9 Soils & geology

Brown earth soils dominate most of the woodland, particularly on the freely draining main face. Basin bog soils are present in some of the lower lying areas where drainage is poor. The underlying geology is Silurian sandstone, mudstone and siltstone.

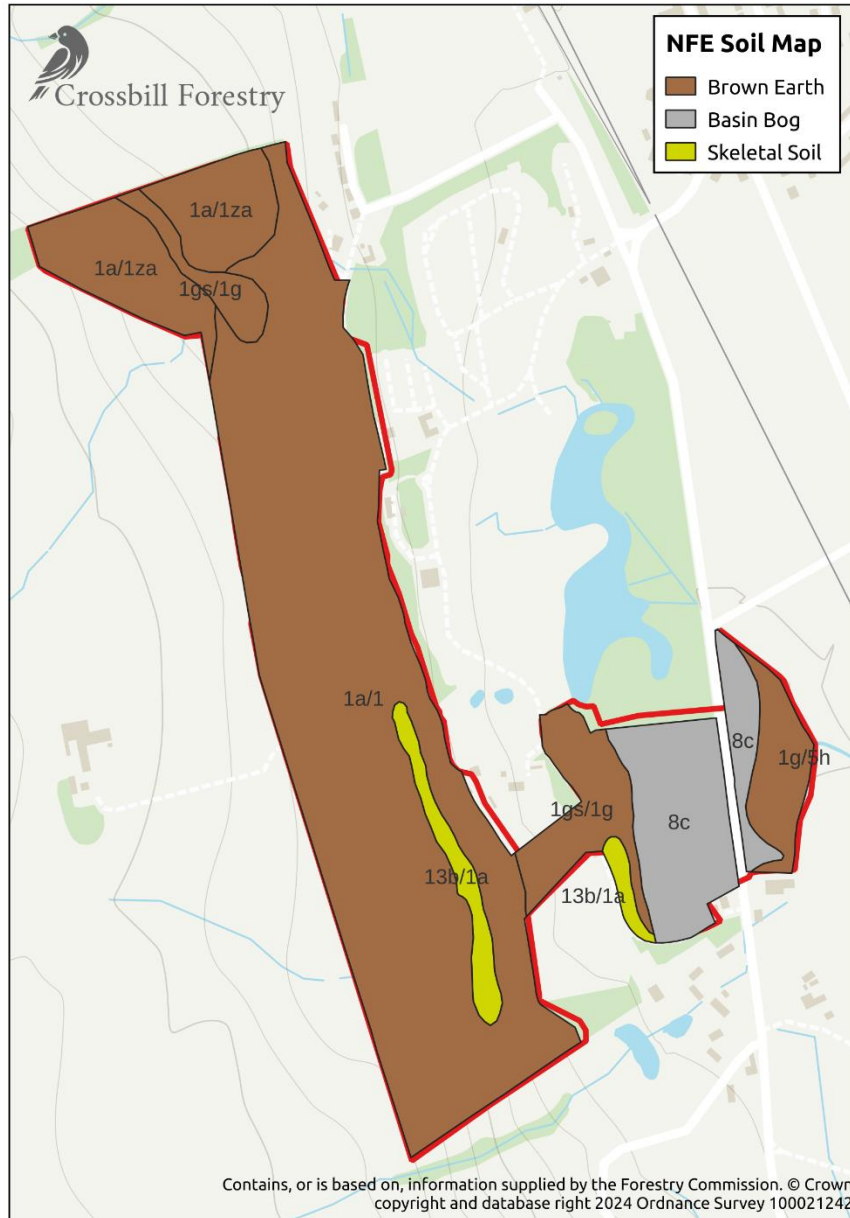


Figure 12: National Forest Estate soils data indicate that much of Craigiellands is occupied by brown earth soil types.

### 2.2.10 Climate

The Forestry Commission's Ecological Site Classification decision support tool<sup>4</sup> ("ESC") classifies the site as warm, moderately exposed and moist, with an accumulated temperature score of 1259 and a moisture deficit of 105. Both of these values are expected to increase significantly by 2050 based on future climate scenarios, and this should be considered in the species choice for re-planting.

### 2.2.11 Access and recreation

The forest is served by two access roads (from two distinct access points), which are accessible from the U305A, a consultation route for timber haulage. The access roads at the southern end of the property also serve several residential properties. The access road at the northern end also provides access to Craigielandshill, a farm to the west of the property. This 600m section of road has an average gradient of 9% but steepens to a gradient of 20% for the final 150m. This is considered beyond the capability of timber lorries and other heavy vehicles (such as low loaders for machine transport).

There is no provision for public parking within the woods, although there are a number of lay-bys within easy walking distance of access points, and there is parking within the village. There are a number of informal walking routes, but many have become obstructed by wind damaged trees or harvesting residues. These paths are not waymarked, and many are not marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

### 2.2.12 Yield class

Based on planting years recorded in the FLS sub-compartment database, the property contains some exceptionally high yield class crops, including a small stand of Douglas fir with a top height of 40m at age 50. This falls beyond the upper limit of top height/age curves, and it seems likely that the recorded planting year is incorrect and the stand pre-dates FLS ownership. On this basis, across much of the woodland we cannot reliably infer general yield class, but the presence of such quality trees does suggest great productive potential.

One part of the woodland where we can reliably measure yield class (due to confidence in recorded planting years) is in the Norway spruce stands close to the southern boundary. In these areas we have top height measurements derived from 2015 LiDAR, and ground measurements from May 2024, both indicating a general yield class of 22. This is at the upper range of expected yield class for Norway spruce in Scotland.

### 2.2.13 Timber revenue potential

It is recognised that sustainable management of the woodland will require an element of small-scale timber harvesting, and this in-turn could provide useful revenue to fund potential project activities.

In the short term, there are several viable areas where a strong case can be made for immediate clear fell harvesting. At the southeast of the forest property are several hectares of Norway spruce which were planted in 1959. These stands have now surpassed their age of maximum mean annual increment – the end of their biological rotation.

On the eastern side of the public road is a stand comprising 1.34ha of Norway spruce standing at approximately 850m<sup>3</sup> per hectare. The average diameter of trees in this block is over 50cm, and these ‘oversize’ trees will become less desirable to timber purchasers as they continue to grow and exceed the diameter limits of standard milling machines. Further, within this block, there are areas of windthrow which appear to be steadily expanding. A strong case can be made for harvesting and re-planting this block, to avoid further wind damage.



*Figure 13: Coupe A has already been partly compromised by wind damage in less freely draining areas. It seems likely that this will extend further without intervention.*

On the western side of the public road are a further 2.19ha of Norway spruce. Of this, 1.32ha were badly damaged in Storm Arwen and are almost completely windthrown. It may make sense to recover this timber before it loses all value.





Figure 14: With the exception of windfirm edge trees, coupe B was almost entirely windthrown during Storm Arwen in 2021.

The remaining 0.87ha appear stable and windfirm, and despite standing at over 900m<sup>3</sup> per ha, its higher stocking density means a lower average diameter of 40cm. In other words, there is no immediate need to harvest this block, and its retention may benefit the resident red squirrel population, whilst providing a non-cash financial reserve for the project.

Table 1: Estimated marketable timber volume within each of the three coupes described.

Coupe	Vo/ha (m <sup>3</sup> )	Net area (ha)	Total vol (m <sup>3</sup> )	Sample
A	859	1.34	1,151	8.95%
B	400*	1.32	528	0.00%
C	932	0.97	811	4.60%



*Figure 15: The higher stocking density of coupe C has produced an equivalent standing volume to coupe A, with a lower average tree size.*

#### 2.2.14 Maintenance liabilities

On the site walkover, previous damage to the march fence and dyke from windthrown trees was evident. General maintenance of boundary fences is shared between landowners, nonetheless, clearance of windthrown trees from within the forest would be at the expense of the community woodland.

The maintenance costs for paths and internal access roads will also need to be considered, including the cost of regular tree safety surveys.

### **2.3 “Craigielands Community Woodlands”**

#### 2.3.1 Charity background

In response to the notice given by FLS of an intent to sell, a group of five local residents formally registered an interest with FLS in acquiring the woodland through the Community Asset Transfer Scheme and applied for charitable status under the Scottish Register of Charities.

The charity was registered on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 under the name “Craigielands Community Woodlands”, which for the purposes of this report will be hereafter referred to as “CCW” to clearly differentiate it from the woodland property itself.

### 2.3.2 The CCW Board

The team behind the initial enquiries and charity registration now forms the interim board of trustees for CCW. This board shall retire at the first general meeting, but individuals will be eligible for re-election at this time. Membership of the interim board is as follows:

- Adam Murray – a local craftsman and maker of bespoke timber buildings.
- Paul Fotheringham – a career forestry professional and current forestry lecturer, who has lived next to Craigielands Woodland for over 30 years.
- Andrew Macqueen – a local forester.
- Graham Ovens – a retired rural engineer, local resident and wildlife enthusiast.
- Rachel Scott – a local resident who has worked in land-based education and project management.

### 2.3.3 Governance

The charity is governed by a constitution which has been approved by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). Aspects of the constitution are summarised below.

The charity is made up of Ordinary Members, Junior Members, Associate Members, Corporate Members and Charity Trustees. Constitutionally, the organisation shall have no fewer than 20 members at a given time. Should the membership fall below this number, the board may only conduct essential business, including appropriate steps to admit sufficient ordinary members.

Ordinary membership is open to any individual over the age of 16 who is a member of the community (defined as the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish). Junior membership extends to those aged between 12 and 15 who are members of the community (junior members are not eligible to serve as trustees). Associate membership is open to individuals who are not members of the geographical community but support the objects of the organisation (associate members are not eligible to stand for election or vote at members’ meetings).

The board shall convene one General Meeting each year as an AGM which will include:

- A report by the Chairperson on the activities of the charity.
- The election of Trustees.
- The fixing of annual subscriptions.
- Consideration of the accounts.

- A report of the auditor (if applicable).
- The appointment of the auditor (if applicable).

The quorum for a general meeting shall be the greater of eleven members, or 10% of the membership, present in person or by proxy. Each member shall have one vote. Most resolutions will be passed with a simple majority; however, special resolutions require at least two thirds of the voting members to be in favour. Special resolutions include those which seek to:

- Alter the name of the organisation.
- Amend the purposes of the organisation.
- Amend certain clauses of the constitution.
- Wind up the organisation.

The affairs, property and funds of the organisation are directed and managed by a Board of Charity Trustees. The responsibilities of the board include:

- Setting the strategy and policy of the organisation.
- The day-to-day management of the organisation.
- Monitoring the financial position of the organisation.

Members of the Board of Trustees may not also be paid employees of the organisation. The board shall have no fewer than three members, and no more than seven members. The board shall comprise up to seven individuals elected by voting members (who must themselves be ordinary members), as well as up to three co-opted individuals (appointed by the board), to ensure a spread of skills and experience within the board. Co-opted members must not outnumber the elected trustees.

Elected trustees must be nominated in writing by at least two members. Each member has one vote for each vacancy. Retiral by rotation rules within the constitution ensures a mixture of continuity and new input within the board. Board members must adhere to a robust code of conduct which prevents conflicts of interest.

Each year, accounts shall be prepared which comply with all relevant statutory requirements. The board shall provide members with a copy of the accounts at each AGM. Copies of these accounts must be sent to all members, trustees, office bearers and the auditor, at least 21 days before the date of the general meeting.

The organisation may be wound up or dissolved only on the passing of a special resolution (as described above) which is subject to written consent being obtained from the OSCR. In the event of dissolution, any property and assets that remain after satisfaction of debts and liabilities shall be transferred to another community body or charitable group which has purposes closely resembling the purpose of the CCW. This must be determined by no fewer than two thirds of ordinary members at a general meeting and approved by the OSCR.

#### 2.3.4 Eligibility for asset transfer

The Scottish Land Fund has specific eligibility criteria for organisations applying for Stage 2 funding. Firstly, the community organisation making the application must be a corporate body, meaning a legal entity which can hold contracts and own property. As an SCIO, CCW meets this criterion.

Secondly, the organisation must work in the interests of a clearly defined geographic community, and the organisation's main purpose must be consistent with furthering the interests of that community. Constitutionally, the "purpose" of CCW is "to benefit the community of Beattock and District defined by the boundary of Kirkpatrick Juxta Community Council".

Thirdly, ordinary (or voting) membership of the organisation must be open to all over the age of 16 within the geographic community, and more than half of the voting seats on the board must be occupied by community residents. This requirement is satisfied as described in section 2.3.3.

Finally, the organisation must be managed on a not-for-profit basis, with surplus funds being re-invested in the purposes of the organisation and not being distributed to members. In the event of dissolution, assets must be passed to another not-for-profit organisation with similar objectives. CCW meets these requirements.

## **3. Policy context**

### **3.1 National policy**

#### 3.1.1 Primary legislation

In recent years, a number of items of primary legislation passed by Scottish Parliament (including the Community Empowerment Act 2015<sup>5</sup>) have introduced (and continue to encourage) community rights to buy land and other assets. Initiatives made possible by this legislation are funded by the Scottish Land Fund (which has an annual budget of £10 million) and are recognised in the Scottish government's National Performance Framework.

#### 3.1.2 Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029

Within Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029<sup>6</sup>, there are three key objectives:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high-quality environment.
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

In addition, there are six priorities. Four of these are listed below for their relevance to this potential community woodland project:

- Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed.
- Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands.
- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands.
- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

The aspirations of the Craigiels Community Woodland are well aligned with these national strategic priorities.

### **3.2 Regional policy**

#### 3.2.1 Dumfries and Galloway Local Plan

The adopted local development plan<sup>7</sup> for the area recognises the value of the forest industry to the local economy, and particularly encourages forestry proposals which have a positive effect on nature

conservation and/or historic environment interest. Proposals which take account of possible recreational use are also encouraged. The plan seeks to guide the planting and restructuring of forests and woodlands to “maximise the benefits for the local economy, communities and environment”.

More generally, regarding the historic environment, the plan notes that this "can play a key role in building, supporting and regenerating communities and engendering community spirit, giving a sense of place and identity and help to create a place where people want to live and work”.

The objectives of the Craigiels Community Woodland align well with this, by aiming to protect the significant historic features which are present, whilst also enhancing biodiversity, encouraging recreation, and providing education opportunities focused on ecology and sustainable woodland management. This is expected to maximise the benefits to the local economy, communities and the environment.

### 3.2.2 Dumfries and Galloway Forest & Woodland Strategy

The Dumfries and Galloway Forest & Woodland Strategy<sup>8</sup> is divided into five ‘themes’.

Theme A of the Forest & Woodland Strategy is “Woodlands and the Environment”, which aims to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the region, whilst protecting water quality and historic environment features. Key actions include the restoration of ancient woodlands through removal of non-native species (e.g., Rhododendron), and managing sites recognised as having importance for red squirrel.

Theme B of the strategy is “Woodlands and Sustainable Growth”. Amongst other objectives, this section aims to support forestry skills development and enhance forestry related tourism. The strategy is supportive of developing the hardwood timber sector, encouraging new entrants into the sector, and encouraging more local processing of timber.

Theme C of the strategy is “Woodlands and Climate Change”. This section encourages the diversification of the woodland resource, and utilisation of low impact techniques which minimise soil disturbance.

Theme D of the strategy - “Woodlands for People”, is particularly relevant. The three key policy objectives of this section of the strategy are:

- Encourage and promote the use of forests and woodlands to improve health and wellbeing in a variety of ways.
- Encourage and promote the use of forests and woodlands for outdoor learning.
- Increase the opportunities for access and links to and enjoyment of forests and woodlands by all sectors of society, particularly by developing new woodlands close to towns and villages and promoting community development and participation in woodland management and promoting sustainable travel as a means of access.

The value of woodlands close to towns and villages is recognised within the strategy as offering significant opportunities to promote active lifestyles amongst a diverse range of groups. The strategy also strongly

encourages the use of woodlands for outdoor learning, noting that “it is essential that schools have easy access to woodlands [...] for outdoor learning opportunities to be fully realised. Establishment and management of woodlands close to communities, linked by safe walking and cycling routes should be encouraged wherever possible”.

Another key facet of the strategy is the promotion of access to woodlands by all sectors of society, in particular by “promoting community participation in woodland management”. The strategy is supportive of creating volunteering opportunities to foster a sense of ownership, and developing a greater diversity of recreational activities which appeal to a range of users and groups.

The objectives of the Craigiels Community Woodland align with the objectives of each of these four themes. The fifth theme (“E”) relates to woodlands and development and is not relevant to this project.



## 4. Consultation

### 4.1 Community consultation

#### 4.1.1 Community survey

In January 2024, an information document and survey were circulated to local residents by the CCW team via a letter drop. This was also shared via community social media groups, and via an advertisement in the local newspaper. This survey document explained the aspirations and outcomes of community ownership and asked residents:

1. If they supported the idea of a community woodland project for Beattock.
2. If they were interested in becoming involved in any way, in the project.

A free text box also invited respondents to share their comments, suggestions and ideas which they would like to see considered in the planning and execution of the proposed project.

#### 4.1.2 Survey response

The survey received a strong response. Of the 39 respondents, 100% were supportive of the idea of a community woodland project for Beattock, and 82% (32) were interested in becoming involved.

A number of respondents also offered additional statements of support:

- “[I] think it would have a multitude of benefits for the local community”
- “Very good idea”
- “A community woodland would be a real asset and of great benefit to the Beattock area”
- “It would be beneficial to the community to be mutually connected to the project and their local environment”

Several respondents explicitly offered their assistance with the implementation of the project:

- “Happy to contribute technical forestry expertise to the project (e.g., soil survey, inventory, silvicultural options)”
- “Count me in”

Others offered specific ideas for the development of the project. Two respondents emphasised inclusivity, one stated that “access for the disabled would be welcome, such as handrails where necessary, or wheelchair access, [and] some seating areas”. Another suggested that the project should “ensure its [sic] a space adapted and can be well utilised by the local community”.

The implementation of this is addressed in section 6.1 Areas managed for recreation will incorporate inclusive design principles wherever possible. This will include handrails, seating and wheelchair access.

Five responses mentioned wildlife conservation aspirations, which included:

- “[develop] areas for wildlife support”
- “aim to replace and restore with native species”
- “remove all rhododendron for the benefit of wildlife”
- “work with and incorporate into wider networks such as red squirrel strongholds”

Wildlife conservation has been adopted as a key objective of the project, as described in section 6, and the specific aspirations of community respondents have been incorporated into outline plans for the woodland. The Moffat and District Red Squirrel Group have been engaged with, to ensure that red squirrel conservation efforts complement wider efforts in the area, and some specific management strategies are discussed in section 6.2. The control of rhododendron is addressed in section 5.3.1, and potential grant funding to support this work has been considered in the financial appraisal of the project.

Finally, one respondent stressed that “sustainable timber/firewood using horse logging or similar” should also form part of the project’s activities, and another stated that “education and recreation” should be objectives. Based on this community consultation, wildlife conservation, education, recreation, and sustainable forestry have been adopted as complementary objectives, as described in section 6.

#### 4.1.3 Summary

The community consultation exercise proved to be a strong endorsement of the project. Survey responses evidenced a strong connection to the woodland property itself and showed strong public support for a community woodland.

Many survey respondents had views and ideas on what the priorities of the project should be, some of which were very specific, such as protection of snowdrops and removal of rhododendron. 82% of respondents were willing to offer their help to the project on a voluntary basis. This level of community engagement, along with a lack of negative responses is highly encouraging.

## **4.2 Stakeholder consultation**

### 4.2.1 Kirkpatrick-Juxta Community Council

The KJCC has been kept informed of progress during the initial community asset transfer enquiries, subsequent charity registration and Scottish Land Fund Phase 1 funding application. The community council were given a presentation on the aspirations for the community woodland at a meeting on the 9th of November 2022, and the KJCC gave their support in principle, as recorded in the minutes<sup>9</sup>.

*“The [CCW] group wanted to let KJCC know what was happening and looking to the future they might require support to get some community funding, but at the moment they just wanted to know they could have support in principal [sic] from KJCC. This was agreed.”*

#### 4.2.2 Beattock Primary School

The manager of the Beattock Primary School Nursery has expressed strong support for the project,.

*“Outdoor learning is a huge part of our daily routine and we enjoy visiting areas such as the Heritage Park, play park and the ponds within the Manor Park. We would very much welcome a new community area and would be delighted to be involved with your team.”*

The Beattock Nursery also expressed an interest in developing the woodland to provide experiences such as Forest Schools or Outdoor Classrooms. They cite research from Learning Through Landscapes which highlights the positive impact of such projects on attitudes to learning, behaviour, and improved social interaction.

#### 4.2.3 Dumfries & Galloway Woodlands

The Dumfries & Galloway Woodlands Initiative is the coming together of a range of partners – organisations and individuals – that want to support trees, habitats and the people that depend upon them in Dumfries & Galloway.

In January 2024, information regarding the potential community woodland at Craigiels and its aspirations were shared with D&G Woodlands for comment. They responded with a letter of strong support, an extract from which is included below.

*“We write to record our support for the volunteers driving the Craigiels Community Woodlands proposal. Community acquisition of the site would protect a valuable and visible woodland surrounding the community of Beattock. Nearby critical transport infrastructure increases the visibility further but also increases the ecological need for active biodiversity support and management in the area.*

*The group is genuinely representative of the local community, and we will be offering to assist in any way that we can.”*

#### 4.2.4 Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels

Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels is a partnership project that co-ordinates conservation efforts in priority areas to ensure red squirrels continue to be a part of Scotland’s special native wildlife. Details of the

proposed community woodland were shared with the Moffat and District Red Squirrel group, who responded extremely positively, an extract from their response is included below:

*“[Moffat and District Red Squirrel Group] would like to add the weight of our support to the ownership of the woodland by the Community Craigielslands Group. We are delighted to be able to work alongside them in Red Squirrel conservation work”*

#### 4.2.5 Dumfries and Galloway Council

In January 2024, information was shared with the local authority regarding the potential community woodland and its aspirations. The council responded with a letter stressing their support for community ownership of assets like Craigielslands Woodland and offering their advice and support. An extract from this letter is included below.

*“Dumfries and Galloway Council is very supportive of initiatives like this, we believe that community ownership of assets like this is the best way to achieve long term environmentally sensitive custodianship. [...] please keep in touch with myself and others in the DGC Environment team, if we can offer advise [sic] and support we will.”*

#### 4.2.6 SRUC Barony Campus

SRUC Barony is a local college offering further education and higher education courses in a range of subjects with a rural focus, including forestry, arboriculture, and countryside management. CCW has strong links to the college and there are aspirations for close collaboration on educational initiatives.

Dr Hugh Morris, the Programme Leader of Forestry at SRCU Barony has offered strong support for the proposal to adopt Craigielslands as a community woodland. An extract from his letter is included below.

*“This presents a great opportunity to become a great educational resource for students and staff at SRUC to participate in an exciting project that will be a living example of the best that sustainable woodland can be.*

*As SRUC is a tertiary education institution, we have students learning at all levels who would have the potential to benefit from this project. Our further education students would be able to gain practical experiences through the range of tasks possible on the site. The truly sustainable nature of the vision for the woodland means that our higher education would have access to a truly sustainable example of small woodland management. This would present opportunities for case studies and examples of the use of alternative tree species and silviculture as well as species conservation and community engagement.*

*In summary, well managed community woods are crucial to help us restore the environment, for health and wellbeing of the people who live among them and for posterity. I am in full support of this.”*

## 5. Woodland management

In this section, options for management of the existing woodland are considered. Based on the detailed review of the woodland asset, summarised in section 3, this section aims to weigh up management options to identify potential sources of revenue (which could help finance project activities) as well as potential costs and liabilities (which could threaten its sustainability).

### 5.1 Harvesting

#### 5.1.1 Roadside Norway spruce

As outlined in section 2.2.13, Norway spruce to the east of the U305A (coupe A) has now surpassed its biological rotation and has a large average tree size (>50cm average diameter at breast height). Indefinite retention of this 1.34ha block risks reducing its value, by increasing the proportion of ‘oversize’ logs, which are too large for conventional sawmills to process. In addition, the crop appears unstable, and has sustained several areas of wind damage which appear to be steadily extending.

Standing at an estimated 850m<sup>3</sup>/ha, this block could yield 1,150m<sup>3</sup> of timber, or approximately 1,000 tonnes. Allowing for fluctuations in timber price and uncertainty surrounding harvesting costs (unknown costs include the amount of hand felling required and traffic management expenses), this could provide a cash injection to the project of between £40,000 and £70,000.

On the western side of the U305A, close to the forest gate, are two additional blocks of Norway spruce, one of which was badly damaged during Storm Arwen in 2021 (coupe B). Timber measurement in this 1.32ha block was not practical, but if we conservatively estimate that 400m<sup>3</sup>/ha of timber is recoverable and apply a low standing sale price, we can reasonably assume it will yield an additional cash injection of at least £10,000.

The combined income from these two blocks (which would be most efficiently sold as a single unit) could fund the project’s immediate cash spends whilst also starting to develop a cash reserve. This cash reserve would de-risk the community woodland from unforeseen fluctuations in income and expenditure. An advance on this income could also potentially be used to help finance the initial acquisition.

The final Norway spruce block (coupe C, 0.87ha) appears stable and windfirm, it also has a lower average diameter of 40cm. In other words, there is no immediate need to harvest this block, and its retention may benefit the resident red squirrel population, whilst providing a non-cash financial reserve for the project. However, it should be noted that 0.87ha is an exceptionally small coupe in the context of southern Scotland. The proportionally higher positioning costs incurred by the harvesting contractor would be reflected in lower standing sale prices at time of harvesting.

It should be noted that some initial expenditure may be required to facilitate harvesting (possible a temporary bell mouth and road opening for coupe A), which should be informed through conversations

with harvesting specialists. Grant funding through FGS could recover some of the cost of this, but if cash is not available for the work, it may be necessary for the timber purchaser to arrange and/or fund the works. This would be reflected in a lower standing sale price.

It may also be prudent to budget a provision for professional services costs to assist with the marketing and supervision of harvesting operations, rather than relying on contributions from suitably experienced community volunteers.

Timber haulage from each of these blocks would be via the U305A, a consultation route for timber haulage.

Timber can be sold standing for a lump sum, or on an outturn basis (with or without a guaranteed minimum). The advantages of a lump sum sale are providing certainty regarding the total revenue and mitigating potential conflicts of interest between the seller and the buyer. For buyers, in an outturn-basis sale, lower recovery rates on 'loss-leading' product types may be acceptable and not strictly supervised, but for the seller, this reduces overall revenue and compromises the site for restocking. Timber sales sold on an outturn basis must therefore be supervised more carefully.

In a lump sum sale, it is in all parties' interests to recover as much volume as possible from the site, including lower margin products. An outturn-basis sale with a guaranteed minimum can be a good compromise.

#### 5.1.2 Hardwood thinning

In several areas throughout the woodland, a case can be made for selective felling or thinning of hardwood crops. In some areas of former larch mixtures, natural regeneration may be helped by the removal of several overstorey trees. Additionally, in several areas of younger sycamore, the stocking density is high, and a selective low thin could produce a quantity of fuel wood whilst potentially helping to develop a future hardwood timber stand.

Responses to the community survey were supportive of low-impact timber production, and the marketing of these areas to a local firewood enterprise would also have the co-benefit of also supporting local businesses.



*Figure 16: Selective thinning in over-stocked sycamore stands could be beneficial for long-term stand development.*

## **5.2 Re-planting**

### **5.2.1 Ex-larch mixtures**

The former larch mixtures which were felled under SPHN in 2020 have either not been re-planted, or the planting has failed. In some areas, natural regeneration of native species is beginning to capture the site, and this should be encouraged through appropriate interventions. This could include the removal of gorse, rhododendron and other species which are creating excessive competition. Selective thinning of retained overstorey trees may also be beneficial in some areas.

Natural regeneration could continue to be monitored and supplemented with enrichment planting in the future as required.

Areas which currently have limited natural regeneration would benefit from re-planting. To preserve the 'character' and ensure the resilience of the woodland, this could comprise a mixture of coniferous and broadleaved species. This also presents an opportunity to introduce 'alternative' species. This would increase diversity and resilience in the short term, and in the longer term, could provide demonstration stands and a supply of timber to specialist markets.





Figure 17: Natural regeneration can be encouraged across much of the site, open areas at the northern and southern boundary may require replanting.

Species choice within both the broadleaved and coniferous areas will need to take account of local site conditions (including soils and drainage), climate change predictions, and key wildlife considerations (such as habitat provision for red squirrels – a key aspiration of community residents is red squirrel conservation).



The practicality of planting in some of the areas identified shouldn't be underestimated. The steep slopes, dense vegetation and difficult terrain will make progress slow, and if contractors are engaged, this will be reflected in higher-than-average planting rates. Further, as mechanical ground preparation will not be practical, a budget sum for a mechanical or chemical 'screef' (at time of planting) will also be required.

### 5.2.2 Restocking of harvesting coupes

If harvesting is carried out in line with the recommendations given in section 5.1, then an additional 2.66ha of site preparation and restocking will be required in the early years of the project. Norway spruce has grown well in the first rotation in coupe A and from an economic perspective it would be a strong candidate for restocking (with improved genetic stock). The re-instatement of Norway spruce would also likely benefit the resident red squirrel population.

The windthrow in coupe B appears to have been partially caused by drainage issues, and it may be appropriate to replant this site with an alternative species or manage the area as a wet woodland habitat.

### 5.2.3 Ongoing crop maintenance

Re-planted crops will require ongoing maintenance to ensure their survival and establishment. Budget sums should be provided for weeding and 'beating up' (replacement of failed trees) in the first two years post planting. The risk of pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*) damage in conifer areas is perceived to be low due to the length of time the site has been left fallow. However, the harvesting of coupes A and B, could lead to some weevil activity and this should be monitored.

## **5.3 Invasive species removal**

### 5.3.1 Rhododendron

Rhododendron incursion is a recognised issue within Craigiels Woodland, and was raised by members of the community during consultation.

Through garden escapes, rhododendron has begun to colonise areas of the woodland, and in recent years has been helped by the ground disturbance and canopy removal associated with the SPHN larch felling and windthrow. If left unchecked, this is likely to have an adverse effect on biodiversity, particularly for ground flora, by forming a dense, shady understorey and reducing the soil pH.

Grants are available through the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) to help fund the removal of rhododendron, and there may also be opportunities for volunteer labour.

### 5.3.2 Other species

Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) is present in the forest, and currently adds to the diversity and interest of the woodland. However, its expansion should be monitored. Western hemlock is highly shade tolerant, and itself casts dense shade. Considered by some to be a 'transformer' species, its ecological strategy is to shade out other plants and promote a monoculture with little to no plant diversity in its understorey.

Cherry laurel is present alongside rhododendron in some areas and has the potential to negatively affect ground flora and outcompete other natural regeneration in the same way. It should be removed alongside rhododendron.

Other invasive species should be monitored on site visits by the CCW team and other volunteers.

### **5.4 Roads maintenance**

Keeping existing access roads in good condition will simplify ongoing management and help to prevent a requirement for large capital spends in the future. The existing access road up to Craigielandshill is currently badly rutted in places and may benefit from re-grading and/or a top dressing with additional stone, depending on professional advice and discussions with the neighbouring farmer who shares the access.

### **5.5 Fence maintenance**

The legal boundary of Craigielands Woodland is approximately 4.5km long, and along approximately 3km of that length, is a stock-proof fence or dyke with neighbouring farmland which should be periodically inspected and maintained as required. The costs of this maintenance will be shared with neighbouring landowners.

During site surveys, the dyke along the western march was found to be not in stock-proof condition, although no signs of sheep incursion were observed. A sum should be budgeted for repairs to this dyke, and potential grant assistance through FGS should be investigated.

### **5.6 Wildlife management**

To protect planted trees and encourage natural regeneration, a programme of deer control may be appropriate. However, this may conflict with recreation objectives and will need to be carefully considered and managed. The use of deer deterrent products, such as Trico from Agrigem could be considered as an

alternative protective measure for conifers. Broadleaves will likely be protected using tree shelters, and mammal damage will be monitored on site visits as part of ongoing management.

### **5.7 Tree inspection**

As the landowner, CCW will have responsibility for the safety of those accessing the woodland and must take reasonable steps to manage potential risks. A key facet of this will be regular tree inspections, so that potentially dangerous trees can be identified. These surveys will need to be carried out at appropriate intervals by a suitably qualified individual.

### **5.8 Insurance**

The project should be protected from litigation through the sourcing of appropriate liability insurance premiums. This would include, as a minimum, public liability insurance (and employers liability insurance, as required to cover volunteer labour and contractors). It would also be worth considering appropriate insurance to cover against storm or fire damage. Appropriate insurance cover will depend on the activities carried out by the community woodland, and professional advice should be sought as these change over time. Processes should also be put in place to ensure that contractors engaged by the CCW, and other third parties using the woodland, are suitably competent and have their own appropriate insurance cover in place.

### **5.9 Professional services**

The CCW team contains several experienced foresters who certainly have the requisite skills and experience to execute the operations described in this section. However, there may be times where team members are unable to dedicate the time required to these activities, and a budget provision for external consultants should be considered.

Many community woodlands engage a 'community forester' to handle much of the day-to-day management of the property and execution of the management plan. Alternatively, consultants could be engaged on an ad-hoc basis to assist as required, for example, with the marketing and supervision of a standing sale, or with periodic tree safety inspections.

## **6. Appraisal of opportunities**

This section describes the opportunities which have been identified to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits through community ownership of Craigielands Woodland.

### **6.1 Recreation**

#### 6.1.1 Walking trails

One of the key aspirations for the community woodland is to open up the wood to the community with a network of waymarked paths, seats, information boards and eventually, shelters. A phased approach can be taken to this, beginning with the re-opening of existing paths and trails where they have become obstructed with windthrown trees or forest operations.

Following the re-opening of existing paths (as budget allows), additional paths could be instated and walking trails devised and waymarked. Different themed trails could focus on features such as archaeological interest, wildlife hotspots, and scenic viewpoints.

Several community survey respondents explicitly requested that paths be inclusive and accessible. The Dumfries and Galloway Forest and Woodland strategy also stresses that woodlands should be made accessible for all sectors in society. Consideration should therefore be given to this in the design and construction of walking trails, ensuring that inclusive design principles are followed.

Paths For All has produced a guidance document<sup>10</sup> which provides practical advice on the establishment of accessible and inclusive paths. Threshold signage, maps and information boards should clearly show, for example, which trails have regular seating and which trails have potential barriers to access, such as narrow or uneven sections.

### **6.2 Wildlife conservation**

#### 6.2.1 Red squirrels

There is a strong aspiration to participate in red squirrel protection in partnership with “Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels”. This could include monitoring, through camera traps, and/or (provided sufficient interest from volunteers) live trapping to control the grey squirrel population. Grant funding is available through FGS for trapping at a rate of £200 per trap per year.

Best practice guidance will be followed with regard to the future species composition and the planning of operations, to ensure it maximises habitat and feeding availability for resident red squirrels. The Forestry Commission Practice Note “Managing forests as red squirrel strongholds” (FCPN102)<sup>11</sup> provides practical guidance on this.

### 6.2.2 Bird and bat boxes

Bird and bat boxes will be installed throughout the woodland. There are opportunities here to harness volunteer labour or perhaps involve the local school in their construction.

### 6.2.3 Habitat creation

The management of open areas as ‘butterfly glades’, abundant in wildflowers and shrubby trees, will provide an array of feed plants for butterfly and moth species.

The establishment of a wildlife orchard will also be considered, to provide a habitat which is largely absent in the local area. Orchards are recognised for their habitat value for pollinators, as well as rare birds and mosses.

Thirdly, the former mill pond, present within the woodland, may be re-instated, to create another additional habitat, boost invertebrate numbers and provide feeding opportunities for bats.

## **6.3 Supporting local enterprise**

### 6.3.1 Production and sale of woodland products

Establishing sustainable production of firewood, sawlogs, sawn timber, bark chips and beekeeping products will generate revenue to help finance the project, whilst supporting local contractors and processors.

### 6.3.2 Engagement of local contractors

The engagement of local contractors to carry out woodland operations (alongside volunteer inputs, where appropriate) will help to support the local contractor resource.

## **6.4 Education and rural skills development**

### 6.4.1 Local school visits

The hosting of visits for local school pupils will introduce students to good forestry practice (linking this to jobs that some of their families may work in) as well as woodland wildlife. This will foster greater connection with nature and greenspace amongst the next generation and help to engage the community in the work of the community woodland. In time, providing children with an introduction to woodland management and the associated jobs could help to encourage more entrants into the sector.

#### 6.4.2 Organised events

Community ownership of the woodland will present opportunities to host educational events, for all ages. This could include bird-watching events, which emphasise woodland species (such as owls, woodpeckers, nuthatches, treecreepers and raptors) and other wildlife identification visits, focussing on, for example, wildflowers, fungi, bats or butterflies.

#### 6.4.3 Provision of training opportunities

Connections with local training providers and colleges could facilitate the hosting of training events. This could include simply providing a venue for training courses, such as chainsaw/firewood processing courses. It could also include inviting college groups (with appropriate supervision and insurance) to assist with windblow clearance, path maintenance and tree safety surveys. This could generate income for the project and save money on maintenance costs, whilst supporting the education and training of the local forestry workforce.

#### 6.4.4 Creating an 'exemplary' woodland

Beattock is a village with strong connections to the local forest industry.

- The village hosts the headquarters of a national timber harvesting company, a local timber haulage firm, and several other businesses which provide services to the forest industry (including a fencing contractor and blacksmith).
- Numerous forestry professionals live in the village and have directly offered their support to the project.
- The FLS district office at Ae Village is located just 20 minutes by road from Craigielands, and the SRUC Barony campus (a leading provider of forestry further education courses) is just 16 minutes by road. Private sector forest management companies are also extremely active in the local area.

Craigielands, in many respects, is in a prime location for the development of an 'exemplary' woodland which showcases best practice, as well as alternative species and alternative silvicultural systems. By managing the woodland with this in mind, hosting industry visits (e.g., RSFS and ICF) and college/university study tours, the progressive management of the woodland can positively influence the wider forest industry.



## **6.5 Local heritage and historic environment**

### 6.5.1 Protection of archaeological features

Numerous archaeological features are present within the woodland from several distinct periods of history, ranging from potentially ancient cairns through to a Victorian icehouse and World War Two bunker. This provides rich archaeological interest which tells the story of the local area and creates unique educational opportunities. The instatement of a history trail would help to educate the local population on the history of the area, and careful management of features, including appropriate open ground buffers, will promote their conservation for future generations.

### 6.5.2 The Scots language

According to the 2011 census, out of 861 people in the parish aged 3 and over, 360 (42%) have some skills in Scot's. This is slightly higher than the national average of 39%.

The conservation of the Scots language has emphatic, cross party support from the Scottish Parliament, and as the Scots language and poetry of Burns form part of the heritage of the area, it may be appropriate to consider opportunities to incorporate Scots into project activities. This could, for example, be in the form of Scots translations on information boards, and as a co-benefit, may attract additional funding from alternative grant sources.

## **6.6 Volunteering and community engagement**

It is anticipated that participation in woodland activities, particularly volunteering opportunities will create enhanced cohesion within the community of Beattock as well as a sense of stewardship of the woodland. Opportunities for volunteering will be taken wherever possible, to assist with the maintenance of walking trails, the planting of trees, removal of rhododendron and other appropriate activities.

Local participation will also be encouraged in monitoring environmental changes as the woodland evolves. This could include baseline ecological surveys at the project outset, followed by annual follow-up surveys. Encouraging local woodland visitors to record sightings of plants and animals will foster awareness and a greater sense of stewardship for the biodiversity in the woodland; it will also provide valuable information and help to ensure that ongoing management is sensitive to the resident wildlife.

## 7. Woodland acquisition

### 7.1 Acquisition process

#### 7.1.1 Community Asset Transfer Scheme

Craigielands Woodland is currently owned by FLS, and as such, the acquisition would be administered through the FLS Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS)<sup>12</sup>. As part of this process, community organisations submit an Asset Transfer Request (ATR), which includes the price that the community is willing to pay for the woodland asset.

The ATR is assessed by the CATS evaluation panel, which comprises seven members, appointed for their expertise across relevant sectors. The evaluation is a two-stage process:

- Stage 1 assesses the projects likely benefits and impacts and makes a recommendation to FLS on approval or refusal.
- Stage 2 is a Best Value Assessment by FLS to determine the asset transfer price.

#### 7.1.2 CATS Evaluation Panel Assessment – Stage 1

The stage 1 scores the level of positive impact from very low to very strong and classifies any potential negative impacts as “critical” - likely to result in a recommendation to refuse – and “potential to mitigate” - which may result in mitigation conditions being applied. The panel then calculate a score based on the level of positive impact; this score (out of 20) is weighted across four categories:

- Benefits (score out of 10 – 50%)
- Viability (score out of 6 – 30%)
- Community support and wider public benefit (score out of 2 – 10%)
- Management of the National Forests and Land (score out of 2 – 10%)

A multiplication factor is then applied to the score to factor the relative benefits of the project in relation to the scale of the asset, and as compared with alternative uses. Projects will be classified as “high” if they maximise the use of the asset, “medium” if they make “reasonable use” of the asset, and “low” if they use only a small part of the asset, or deliver limited benefits compared to the potential benefits of alternative use.

In order to maximise the score awarded from the stage 1 assessment, Craigielands Woodland must therefore demonstrate:

- The potential to deliver a range of financial and non-financial benefits.
- Viability and financial sustainability.
- Community support for the project.

- Evidence of benefits to the wider public.
- Management strategies for the land which are responsible, sustainable and align with national policies and objectives.

The above must be considered in the context of the scale of the woodland asset, and alternative uses.

There is a presumption at stage 1 that any project with no “critical” negative impacts should be approved and move onto the stage 2 assessment. However, it’s important to note that the stage 1 scoring provides a benchmark for the overall benefits of the project, and the FLS best value assessment (stage 2) will take this score into account.

### 7.1.3 CATS Evaluation Panel Assessment – Stage 2

Government subsidies are tightly controlled, and as such, a detailed assessment of project benefits and impacts is necessary before accepting a below-market-value purchase price. The stage 2 “best value assessment” must consider whether offering the community a discount would conflict with other public funding.

At time of making the ATR, CCW will propose a price that they are willing to pay for the woodland asset. Then, a RICS “Red Book” valuation will be carried out, which will be instructed on a shared cost basis with FLS and CCW.

The difference between the price offered and the market value is considered a discount and must comply with competition and cross-subsidy rules. If it does not, then the asset transfer must be at the full market valuation.

The assessment of this is based on the outcomes that the community will deliver, and this assessment will be proportional to the scale of the asset. The key factors taken into account are:

- The extent of the community served and demand for the proposals – proposals should benefit the whole community, meet a clear demand and/or be innovative and exemplar, to maximise performance against this criterion.
- Likelihood that the benefits will be delivered within 5 years – proposals should have a clear plan for the delivery of outcomes.
- Additionality – the outcomes of the proposal should be additional, demonstrating that community ownership will deliver benefits which would not have otherwise been delivered.

## 7.2 Funding for acquisition

### 7.2.1 Scottish Land Fund

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF)<sup>13</sup> is expected to be the primary funding source for the community acquisition of Craigielands Woodland. The SLF funds the purchase of land, land assets and buildings which can contribute to the overall sustainability of a community. The SLF particularly seeks to fund projects which:

- Deliver value for money and are sustainable in the long-term.
- Enable communities to manage local land to deliver benefits for the whole community.
- Deliver real community involvement and participation.
- Help promote communities which are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

Grants of between £5,000 and £1,000,000 are available from SLF to fund the purchase of land or land assets. Up to 95% of the market value can be covered by this grant, with a minimum of 5% of funding needing to come from other sources. This is based on an independent open market valuation, so the purchase price may be higher or lower than this amount. The SLF will also fund reasonable professional, title mapping and legal fees associated with the purchase. It is also possible to request a small amount of initial revenue for eligible project costs post-acquisition. Ineligible costs include:

- Revenue only grants.
- Costs to develop the land post-acquisition, other than initial Health and Safety work.
- Costs incurred before the grant offer is accepted.
- Costs which someone else is paying for.
- Items that only benefit an individual and not the wider project outcomes.
- Funds to build up a cash reserve.

### 7.2.2 Clyde Community Fund

The Clyde Community Fund (CCF) is provided by the owners of Clyde Windfarm (Scotland) Ltd as a joint venture partnership. The fund allocates an annual cash sum between 12 communities surrounding the wind farm, including the Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish (Beattock). Currently, Kirkpatrick-Juxta has £75,456 available, and an application has already been submitted by CCW for £50,000 to put towards the acquisition of Craigielands.

This would supplement the SLF Stage 2 contribution, by providing between 10%-20% of the property's value (to be confirmed by a formal valuation).

The application is a two-stage process, with a decision on the initial application expected in September 2024. If this is successful, a longer form application will need to be submitted, for review in March 2025. This aligns with the timescales for submission of the SLF application, which will follow the ATR decision from FLS.

**7.2.3 Additional sources of funding**

If either application (SLF or CCF) is unsuccessful, it will be necessary to secure additional funding to cover a proportion of initial capital costs. Potential alternative sources of funding include:

- Community fundraising
- Charitable trusts
- Funds secured against future timber harvesting income

Future income from timber harvesting could potentially be leveraged through an advance sale of timber to a timber purchasing company, with provision for an up-front payment of a cash sum. This may incur additional legal fees but could replace CCF capital if the application for this is unsuccessful.

**7.3 Acquisition timescales**

Following the completion and acceptance of this feasibility study, and its underlying business plan and management plan (July 2024), an independent valuation of the woodland asset will be carried out. This will start the ATR with FLS, which may take up to 6 months.

Following a successful ATR, a Stage 2 application will be submitted to SLF. Provided the independent valuation is carried out in August 2024, as planned, the submission of this is expected to be in February 2025.

Between August 2024 and February 2025, the CCW trustees and membership will also explore alternative/additional funding sources, and progress the CCF application, for which a final decision will be expected in March 2025. If applications to the current landowner and capital funders are successful, the acquisition is expected to complete by September 2025 (allowing sufficient time for conveyancing).

	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Clyde Community Fund - Application 1	X							
Completion of Stage 1 works	X							
Woodland valuation produced								
Asset Transfer Request								
Explore other fundraising options								
Seek advice on legal burdens								
Woodland valuation expires								X
Clyde Community Fund - Decision 1			X					
Clyde Community Fund - Application 2								
SLF Stage 2 application								

Figure 18: Gantt outlining the expected timescales for project-critical processes and milestones.

## 8. Outline income and expenditure

### 8.1 Revenue generation opportunities

The financial sustainability of the community woodland is essential to ensure that the woodland asset continues to provide community benefits long after the acquisition. In this section, opportunities to generate revenue to fund the project's activities are explored.

#### 8.1.1 Timber income

The harvesting of existing windthrow and over-mature crops will provide a useful injection of cash at the outset of the project to fund immediate spends. Even if relatively low prices were offered, the estimated income of at least £50,000 would fund re-planting of failed ex-larch crops, as well as initial efforts to re-open walking trails, and still provide a generous cash reserve. Securing an advance on timber income may also contribute to the property acquisition costs, so an appropriate amount should be quantified and 'ring fenced' in cash flow forecasts to ensure it is available for this purpose. This amount should be additional to cash reserves set aside by the charity's reserves policy.

#### 8.1.2 Grant income (FGS)

Numerous grants are available through the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS)<sup>14</sup> to support woodland management activities which align with national objectives. These grants would be administered by Scottish Forestry (SF) through the South Scotland Conservancy.

Potential grant funding is significant, but eligibility requirements are sometimes complex and the funding itself is subject to change, so it should not be relied upon until contracts are in place. This is considered in more detail in section 9 – analysis of major risks. An approved management plan is also a prerequisite for all FGS grant funding.

FGS is divided into "categories" and "options". Specifically, grant funding is available for the following activities which are recommended in sections 5 and 6:



Table 2: Summary of Forestry Grant Scheme options which may be applicable to the project.

Category	Option	Payment rate(s)	Notes
Sustainable Management of Forests	Public Access – Rural Woods	£100/ha/yr (up to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is intended to fund tree/path safety inspections and maintenance of paths and signage.</li> <li>An eligible hectare is 200m of path, up to the total area of the woodland or £10,000 per management unit.</li> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>
	Native Woodland	£25/ha/yr (up to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is intended to fund deer control and monitoring of habitat impacts (including non-native species encroachment).</li> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>
	Species Conservation – Grey Squirrel Control	£200/trap/yr (up to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>
Woodland Improvement Grant	Habitats and Species	Costs for specific items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds a range of habitat improvement operations, including the below.</li> <li>Bracken control.</li> <li>Rhododendron eradication.</li> <li>Restoring drystone dykes.</li> <li>March fencing.</li> <li>Woodland thinning.</li> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>
	Restructuring Regeneration	£550/ha (one off payment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Species diversity requirements will almost certainly be met by default.</li> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>
Forest Infrastructure	Construction of Bell-mouth Junction	£32.40/sqm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must have approved management plan.</li> </ul>

Depending on the total length of existing and newly created walking trails, potential income from “Public Access – Rural Woods” may be between £500 and £1,500 per annum, which may cover professional services fees for tree safety inspections.

At least 5 hectares of the woodland are eligible for the “Native Woodland” option, which would provide £125 per annum for 5 years.

“Restructuring Regeneration” would not cover the cost of re-planting (which would be closer to £6,000/ha for broadleaves and £1,400/ha conifers), but it would offset the expenditure.

The “Grey Squirrel Control”, “Habitats and Species” and “Construction of Bell-mouth Junction” options would provide support with specific capital items and could help to cover the costs of the trapping of grey squirrels as well as the removal of rhododendron and maintenance of boundary fences and dykes.

In summary, excluding the bell-mouth junction grant (which is the least certain), grant income from FGS could provide up to £6,650 of income in the first five years of the project, which would greatly help with running costs.

#### 8.1.3 Grant income (Trainhugger)

‘Trainhugger’ and ‘Green The UK’<sup>15</sup> offer money from train users and businesses to help Royal Scottish Forestry Society (RSFS) members plant trees, at a rate of 50p per tree. Membership of the RSFS is a requirement of this grant but the financial support is superior to the Restructuring and Regeneration grant offered by FGS. It should be noted that if this funding was accessed it would in place of the FGS planting grant, not additional to it.

At a rate of £0.50 per tree, re-planting of ex-larch sites would attract a total payment of up to £4,892, covering approximately 43% of planting costs. In contrast, the FGS option would yield £1,364 or 12% of planting costs.

#### 8.1.4 Other income

Additional recurrent revenue should be raised to keep the project cash flow positive in years where no timber income or grant income can be realised.

An element of income is expected through donations. Information boards within the woodland can share details of the project and have a QR code allowing visitors to make a donation from their smartphone. This approach would be aimed at occasional or one-off visitors to the woodland, with a suggested donation of £5, and assuming 100 visitors per year donate this amount, this would raise £500 annually.

Secondly, recurring donations will be encouraged via marketing content on social media and in the local newspaper. If 30 local donors sign up to donate £3 per month, this would raise £1,080 per year.

Thirdly, corporate sponsorship will be investigated. The village is home to several small to medium sized businesses who will be approached for corporate sponsorship, with a suggested donation of £500 per year. If four businesses are willing to contribute at the suggested amount, £2,000 will be raised annually.

Finally, the hosting of events at the woodland will generate revenue. Events organised by CCW, including wildlife walks, will be run by volunteers at no cost, and attendees will be charged a suggested donation of £12 per person. Assuming six courses can be run per year, and five attendees on each course are in a position to make a donation, £360 will be raised annually.

Third party training providers will be invited to use the woodland as a venue for hosting their courses (e.g., chainsaw courses). For this, the CCW would ask for a donation (a suggested amount of £100). Assuming six courses are run per year, this could raise £600.

In total, this other income from donations and fundraising activity amounts to £5,040, which would cover the routine expense items identified (£5,000) and balance the budget in a year with no project development expenses.

## **8.2 Anticipated costs and liabilities**

### 8.2.1 High-cost items

Significant expenditure anticipated in the first 5 years of community ownership includes:

- The re-planting of bare ex-larch areas (estimated at £12,716).
- Information boards and signage (estimated at £3,000).
- Repairs to western boundary dyke (estimated at £3,000).
- Path improvement works (estimated at £11,500).

A proportion of these spends could be curbed through cost engineering or deferred for a period of time depending on budget availability. This is considered further in section 9.

### 8.2.2 Recurrent expenditure

Each year a minimum sum of money will be required to operate the charity and fund essential woodland management activities. This total amount is estimated at £5,000 and comprises the following items:

- Insurance premiums (estimated at £1,500/yr).
- Professional services - covering tree safety inspections and preparation of accounts (estimated at £1,000/yr).
- General maintenance contingency (set at £2,500/yr).

### 8.3 Reserves policy

The charity’s trustees should set, and continually review a reserves policy to ensure that unrestricted funds are available for unforeseen expenses or lapses in income. Reserve funds should be ring-fenced from funds which are required to meet essential future spending and should be considered additional to explicit contingency sums which may be budgeted for (e.g. “general maintenance”). Maintaining this cash reserve will help to protect the financial sustainability of the charity and may also provide potential grant funders with more confidence.

Initially, this reserve will be set at the value of three years’ routine expenditure (including insurance premiums, general maintenance and professional services fees). This ensures that the project can continue to operate for three fiscal years, in the extremely unlikely event that all income suddenly ceases. Based on the financial projections already outlined, this amounts to £15,000.

Income expected in year 1 post-acquisition will fund this reserve, which can then be maintained by keeping the project cashflow positive as much as possible. The reserve amount should be kept under review, with a formal review at the end of year 5, at which point it can be revised to reflect actual routine expenditure from the first five years of accounts.

If a need arises to spend reserve funds, this should trigger urgent fundraising and/or a review of expenditure, to restore the project to a cashflow positive position and re-fund the reserve as soon as possible.

### 8.4 Outline five-year cash flow

The table below lists outline income and expenditure, as anticipated within the first five years of the project (post-acquisition). This is based on the revenue generation opportunities, costs and liabilities described in sections 8.1 and 8.2.

*Table 3: Outline income and expenditure for the first five years of the project post-acquisition.*

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Income</b>	£68,465	£12,287	£5,905	£5,905	£5,905
<b>Expenditure</b>	£23,468	£15,802	£12,376	£5,490	£5,000
<b>Net income</b>	£44,997	-£3,515	-£6,470	£415	£905
<b>Cash balance</b>	£44,997	£41,482	£35,011	£35,426	£36,331

This cash flow forecast demonstrates a strong cash position in the early years of the potential project, supported by substantial timber income. It also highlights a requirement to develop recurrent revenue streams early in the project's implementation to prevent erosion of this over time.

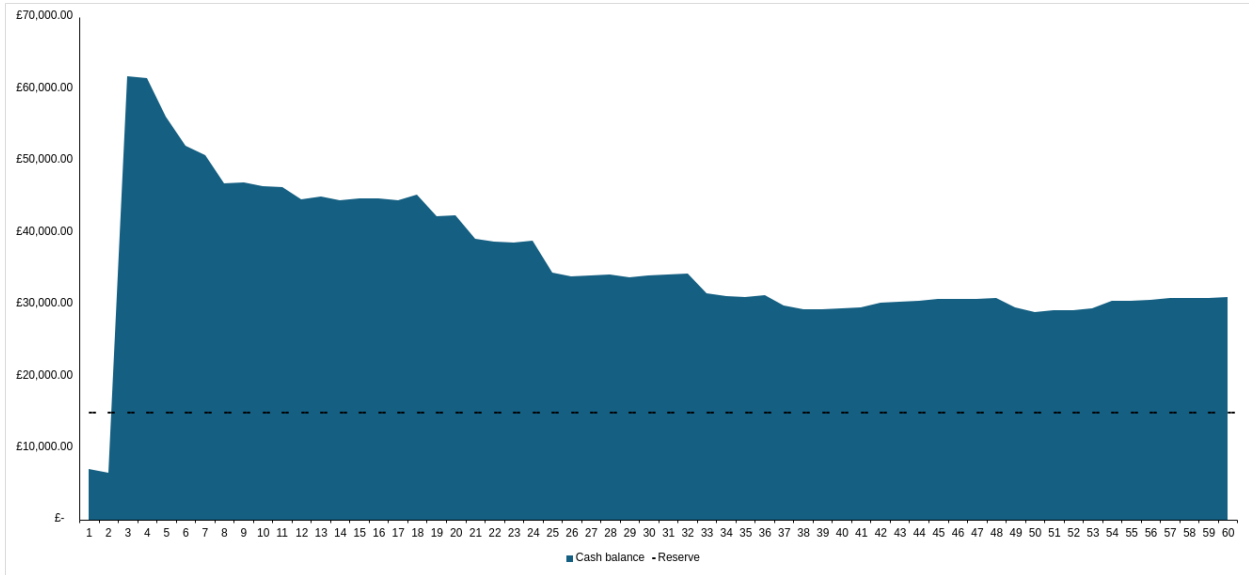


Figure 19: Chart showing projected monthly cash balance from fiscal year 0 through to the end of fiscal year 5, post-acquisition.

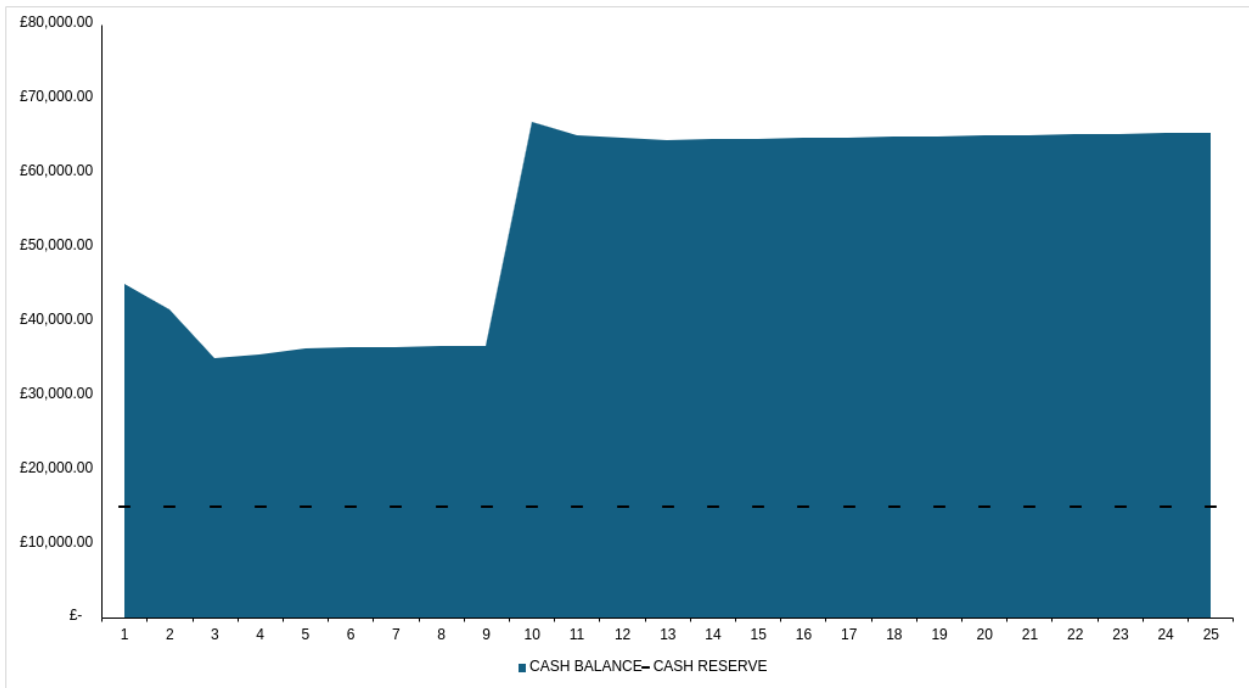


Figure 20: Chart showing projected year-end cash balance from fiscal year 1 through to the fiscal year 25, post-acquisition.

## 9. Analysis of major risks

### 9.1 Acquisition and project initiation

The following risks relate to the time period between submission of applications for Stage 2 SLF funding/FLS asset transfer request, and through the first year post-acquisition.

*Table 4: Analysis of risks and mitigations - woodland acquisition and project initiation.*

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
CATS application fails Evaluation Panel Assessment	Low	Project unlikely to proceed	High quality application submitted, supported by robust feasibility assessment and management plan.
CATS Best Value Assessment recommends no discount on market value	Low/Medium	Increased acquisition cost	As above, ensuring application demonstrates strong performance against key scoring criteria.
Funding bid to SLF is unsuccessful	Medium	Project unlikely to proceed	High quality application demonstrating project sustainability, and strong community support.
CCW unable to raise requisite additional funding for acquisition	Low	Project unlikely to proceed	Investigate options to secure advances on timber income post-acquisition. Produce robust fundraising plan with multiple funding options investigated.
Significant fall in timber prices	Low	Reduced income at outset of project	Medium/long-term price forecasts are positive. Flexibility to defer part of the proposed standing sale during short term depressions in price.
Severe windthrow in woodland prior to marketing of planned standing sales	Low	Reduced income at project outset and increased expenditure on restoring access	Market standing sales as soon as possible post-acquisition. Ensure availability of cash for emergency clearance. Market and recover affected timber as quickly as possible.
Delays in RPID registration, Management Plan approval or other FGS dependencies	High	Delays in implementation of projects and access to grant funding	Ensure good quality, right-first-time applications and paperwork are submitted to SF. Ensure applications are submitted in a proactive and timely manner.
FGS applications unsuccessful	Low	No access to grant funding	Financial planning should consider scenarios where anticipated grant funding does not come in. Consider



			expenditure which could be curbed or deferred to offset lower than anticipated revenue.
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## 9.2 On-going risks

The following risks relate to day-to-day management of the project once it is up and running.

*Table 5: Analysis of risks and mitigations - on-going.*

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Lack of community engagement and willing volunteers	Low	Delays in implementation of projects, increased expenditure on contractors and consultants	Maintain regular engagement with prospective volunteers. Ensure volunteer opportunities are inclusive and promoted effectively.
Lack of time capacity amongst key project contributors	Medium	Delays in implementation of projects	Robust governance and oversight from trustees. Proactively consider engagement of consultants for time critical tasks so they do not drift.
Anti-social behaviour (e.g., fly tipping)	Low	Deterrent to responsible recreation, impacts on local residents and increased costs	Ensure fly tipped waste is cleared quickly to discourage 'copycat' activity. Engage with local community police officers reporting any incidents which occur.
Fire	Low	Damage to trees and ground vegetation, costs for reinstatement, risk of damage to neighbouring property	Maintain diverse forest composition to minimise severity of potential fires. Consider warning signage during high or extreme risk periods, which advises visitors to the woodland to avoid introducing any potential sources of ignition (e.g., cigarettes, camping stoves, barbecues).
Pests and diseases	Medium	Tree mortality, requirement for sanitation felling	Encourage project volunteers to actively and passively monitor for signs of pests and disease. Notable observations should be reported to Forest Research via TreeAlert. Take sensible biodiversity precautions

			(e.g., cleaning tools, vehicles and footwear). Maintain species diversity to reduce the potential impact of specific pests and pathogens.
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## **10. Assessment of project feasibility**

### **10.1 Organisational structure and governance**

CCW is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. CCW has a robust constitution which addresses requirements for membership, the quorums for passing key resolutions, and the process for dissolution.

The day-to-day management of the organisation is presided over by a board of trustees with a majority elected component. The current board of trustees contains several forestry professionals, as well as individuals with other relevant experience which will help drive the project forwards.

Constitutionally, the charity should have a membership of at least twenty, and this requirement has not yet been met. This issue must be urgently addressed in order for the project to succeed.

### **10.2 Alignment with national and regional policy**

This feasibility study has reviewed relevant elements of national policy (including primary legislation, statutory instruments and strategy documents). The objectives and likely outcomes of the potential community woodland at Craigiellands are well aligned with these elements of national policy.

The Community Empowerment Act 2015 emphatically supports community ownership of land and other assets. Scotlands National Forestry Strategy (2019-2029) has amongst its six priorities:

- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands.
- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

The potential community woodland at Craigiellands is expected to enhance the environmental benefits of the existing property, whilst engaging more members of the community, and local businesses in its management.

The project also aligns closely with local policy, specifically the adopted Local Development Plan for D&G, and the D&G Forest and Woodland Strategy. The LDP strongly supports projects which “maximise the benefits for the local economy, communities and environment”. The F&WS encourages and promotes the use of woodlands for outdoor learning and encourages woodlands close to towns and villages, to promote community development and participation in woodland management.

### **10.3 Community and stakeholder support**

Engagement carried out by the CCW team with the community of Beattock and key stakeholders, has proved to be a strong endorsement for the project. 100% of respondents to the community survey were

supportive of the idea, with 82% volunteering to contribute in some way. Statements of support have been received from the community council, the local authority, the local primary school nursery, Moffat and District Red Squirrel Group and D&G Woodlands. No concerns have been raised by members of the community or other stakeholders.

#### **10.4 Viability of woodland management proposals**

Key aspirations for ongoing woodland management at Craigiels Woodland include habitat restoration, introduction of alternative species, and low impact harvesting operations. The existing network of access tracks and favourable site conditions, make these viable objectives. The costs of restoring woodland cover in open areas and restocking potential harvesting sites have been estimated as part of this study and seem achievable in the context of anticipated revenue. The breadth of forestry experience within the CCW members and the wider community will be a great help in the successful execution of these projects.

#### **10.5 Viability of social, economic and environmental aspirations**

Responses to the community survey indicated a strong connection amongst local residents to Craigiels Woodland, and included specific requests to improve access, and enhance biodiversity. This provides a strong indication that paths created and restored through improvement works will be used.

The strong support given by the local school and further education college, as well as enquiries from local training providers, indicate that the woodland will certainly be able to provide educational opportunities through partner organisations and individuals.

Finally, the statement of support from Moffat and District Red Squirrel Group indicated a commitment to support red squirrel conservation efforts within the woodland, and it seems likely that a proportion of the 82% of survey respondents who expressed a desire to be involved, will participate in volunteering opportunities.

#### **10.6 Viability of property acquisition**

##### 10.6.1 Perceived performance against CATS decision criteria

As the property is owned by FLS, property acquisition will be subject to an Asset Transfer Request, evaluated by the CATS Evaluation Panel. Based on information gathered to date, the CCW project is expected to perform well against the panel's decision criteria, on the basis that:

- No negative impacts of community ownership have yet been identified.
- The aspirations for outcomes of community ownership will deliver a range of financial and non-financial benefits.

- ‘Broad brush’ financial projections indicate that the project will be economically sustainable, and the community survey indicated a strong number of willing community volunteers.
- There is strong public support amongst the Beattock community, with a 100% positive response rate amongst survey respondents.
- Woodland management aspirations are aligned closely with national and regional strategic objectives.
- The proposal makes use of the entirety of the woodland asset.
- The proposed activities meet a clear demand, by providing inclusive woodland access to the community.
- Benefits are expected to be realised within the first few years of implementation.
- The proposal is clearly additional, given that the proposed management interventions (including enrichment planting, invasive species removal and path maintenance) have not been carried out in recent years whilst the woodland has been in public ownership.

#### 10.6.2 Funding availability

Acquisition of the woodland will also depend on a successful funding application to the SLF for Stage 2 funding. Based on information gathered to date, the CCW’s project is expected to perform well against the assessment criteria for this funding application, on the basis that:

- The project is expected to deliver economic, social and environmental outcomes which benefit the whole community.
- The organisation contains the skills and capacity required to deliver the project.
- This feasibility study has considered in detail the liabilities and responsibilities that the project will take on.
- The initial cash flow has been projected and revenues considered in the context of expenditure.
- The project is expected to deliver value for money and be sustainable in the long term.

SLF Stage 2 funding will usually fund up to 95% of the property’s market value (plus professional services costs). As such, CCW must either be offered a discount through the CATS Best Value Assessment process or obtain additional funding for at least 5% of the purchase price. Given the strength of the application, it is expected that both the CATS Evaluation Panel and alternative funders will look favourably on the project, and advances on timber income could potentially be realised. In sum, it seems likely that the requisite acquisition funding will be raised.

#### **10.7 Economic sustainability**

Based on initial cash flow projections for the first five years, revenue streams that have been identified (including timber income and grant funding) are expected to cover the project’s running costs, whilst

building a healthy cash reserve. In subsequent years, recurrent revenue will need to be raised for the project to be sustainable in the long term. Financial risks have been identified and appropriate mitigations recommended.

### **10.8 Analysis of major risks and mitigations**

Key barriers for the project to overcome are recruiting the connotationally mandated membership, sourcing SLF Stage 2 funding, sourcing additional capital funding, and making a successful Asset Transfer Request (ATR) to CATS. The risk of this funding and/or ATR not being forthcoming can be mitigated by ensuring strong applications are submitted which emphasise the project's strong performance against scoring criteria.

Once the project is up and running, risks to its sustainability include a lack of volunteers (or time capacity amongst volunteers), and threats to the woodland itself, such as fire, wind and pest/disease. Currently, the woodland's diverse composition mitigates the potential impact of catastrophic wind, fire or pathogenic damage. The risk relating to volunteer capacity can be mitigated through effective recruitment and engagement of volunteers, and the proactive engagement of consultants and contractors for time critical tasks, where there is a risk of drift.

### **10.9 Conclusion**

The potential community woodland at Craighielands has a dedicated organisation in place to administer its management, this organisation has robust governance processes, and its membership has a breadth of experience in forestry, land-based education and project management. The project is considered to be economically sustainable based on initial 5-year and 25-year cash flow projections, and perceived major risks to the project's success can be adequately mitigated.

The aspirations of the project are well aligned with national and regional policy. The project has experienced strong community and stakeholder support, with no potential negative impacts raised. Funding applications and the Community Asset Transfer Request are expected to score well against decision criteria.

Finally, the proposals and aspirations made are considered to be proportionate and realistic, and are expected to have wide reaching social, economic and environmental benefits for the entirety of the local community.



## Additional resources

- 1 Scotlands Census 2011. <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/search-the-census#/>
- 2 Canmore Map Viewer. <https://canmore.org.uk/site/search/result?SITECOUNTRY=0&view=map>
- 3 Craigielslands WW2 Bunker. <https://moffatmuseum.co.uk/beattockbunker/>
- 4 Ecological Site Classification. <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/#>
- 5 Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>
- 6 Scotland's Forestry Strategy. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-forestry-strategy-20192029/>
- 7 D&G Local Development Plan. <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/ldp2>
- 8 D&G Forest and Woodland Strategy. [https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/media/17433/Dumfries-and-Galloway-Forestry-and-Woodland-Strategy/pdf/Forestry\\_and\\_Woodland\\_Strategy\\_April\\_FINAL1.pdf](https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/media/17433/Dumfries-and-Galloway-Forestry-and-Woodland-Strategy/pdf/Forestry_and_Woodland_Strategy_April_FINAL1.pdf)
- 9 Minutes of KJCC Meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022. <https://kirkpatrickjuxtacommunitycouncil.files.wordpress.com/2022/12/kjcc-minutes-09112022.pdf>
- 10 Paths for All Outdoor Accessibility Guidance. <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resources/resource/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-download>
- 11 Managing Forests as Red Squirrel Strongholds. <https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/22-managing-forests-as-red-squirrel-strongholds>
- 12 CATS: How are asset transfer requests evaluated? <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme/asset-transfer-request-evaluation>
- 13 Scottish Land Fund Guidance Notes. <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/Scotland-Land-Fund-guidance-nov-2023.pdf?mtime=20231129131030&focal=none>
- 14 Forestry Grand Scheme. <https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/>
- 15 Trainhugger – grants for resilient woodlands and treescapes. [https://rfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Grants-for-resilient-woodlands\\_Guidance.pdf](https://rfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Grants-for-resilient-woodlands_Guidance.pdf)