

Community Forestry and Regeneration: A Comparison of Three Models in the United Kingdom

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Structure

- Why Community Forestry?
- Cardiff University Research Project
- Three models of Community Forests
- Outcomes from the research
- Recent history and outcomes

Forestry: UK shifting agenda

- Forestry Commission – seeking to balance timber production with other concerns and responsibilities
 - Social
 - Recreational
 - Environmental
- Led to the idea of Community involvement in forestry

Two paths of Community Forestry

- Community forestry where local communities manage industrial forests
 - Often found in USA
 - Rural areas
 - FC experiments in UK – e.g. Longwood (Wales)
Laggan (Scotland)
- Community forestry as Regeneration tool
 - Tends to be Urban Fringe
 - Environments degraded by industry
 - FC involved only as ‘partners’

Cardiff University Research Project

Research in 3 forest areas

- The English National Forest
- Great North Forest
- Central Scotland Forest

Report published 2004

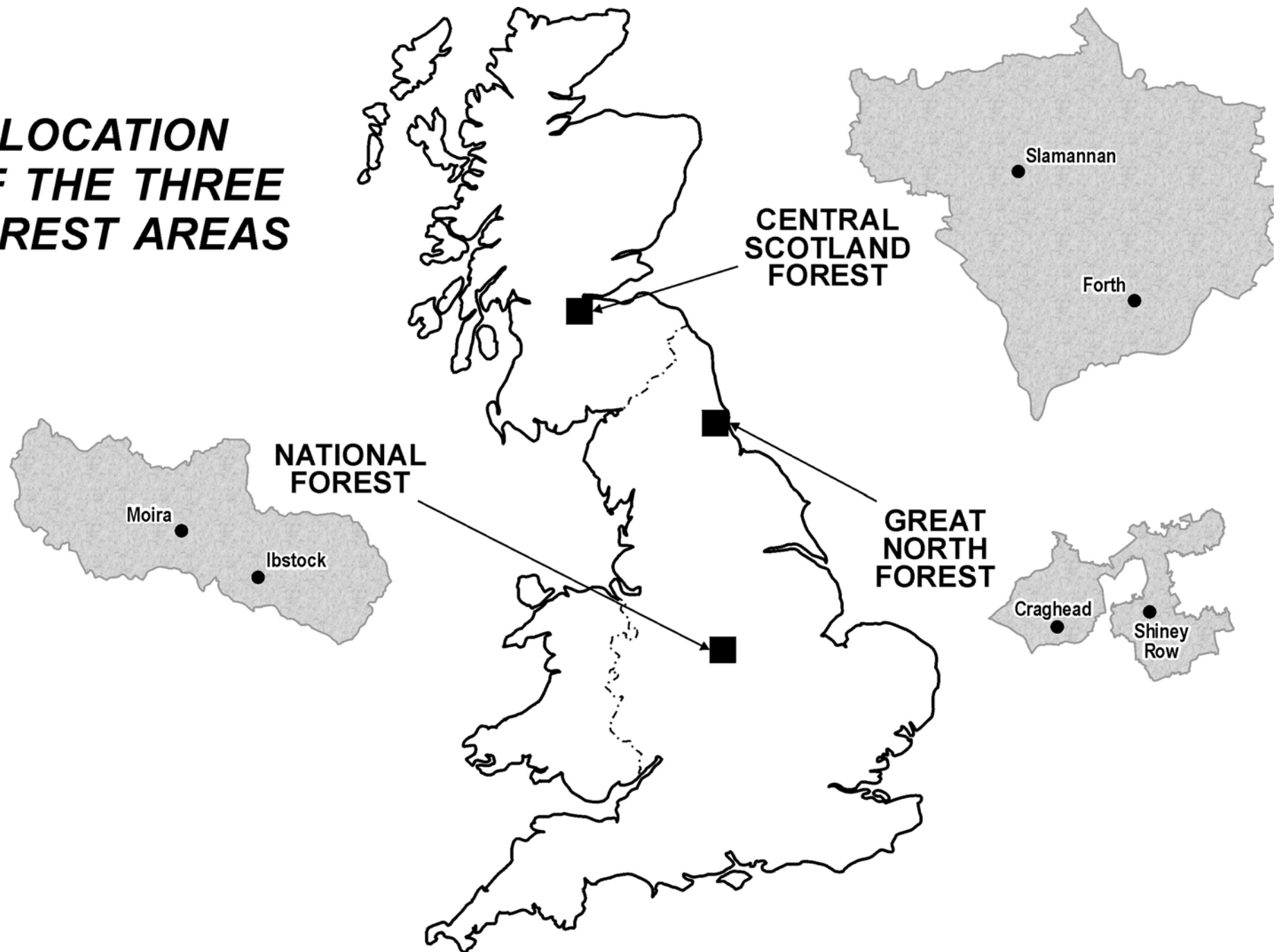
Research Aims

- To investigate the social, cultural and environmental impacts of forests in areas of post-industrial countryside.
- To explore the connections between forestry, forest spaces and social exclusion / inclusion in the context of particular disadvantaged case-study communities.

Research Methods

- Two study communities in each forest
 - Focus groups with a range of community organisations
 - Individual interviews
- Forest-wide interviews
 - Forest organisations
 - Local government
 - Partnership members
 - NGOs
 - Environmental groups
 - Community groups

LOCATION OF THE THREE FOREST AREAS



Commonalities of the three forests

- Coal- mining areas – deep mines
- Strong, ongoing mining culture
- Social problems – close of coal mines
- Environmental degradation
 - Coal tips
 - Polluted watercourses
 - Derelict land
- Open-cast coal-mining continues
- Quarrying
- Land-fill follows open-cast and quarries
- Planning permissions for deep mines
- Agricultural land

The English National Forest

- Idea proposed by the Countryside Commission in mid-1980s
- 1990 - Conservative Central Government organised a competition for the location
- Charnwood-Needwood in the English Midlands chosen
- 200 square miles (512 sq km) from Charnwood Forest in the east, across the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfield to Needwood Forest in the west.
- Central Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfield
 - least wooded area in England
- High proportion of derelict land

The English National Forest: Management and regulation

- 1995 - National Forest Company (NFC)
 - Public limited company
 - Based in Moira – in central coalfield area
 - National Forest Strategy
 - Business Plan
- Extensive Private Land Ownership in the area
- Tender Scheme - payments for giving over land to tree planting to landowners
- High profile policy to establish a strong National Forest identity in the area.

National Forest



National Forest



The Great North Forest

- One of 12 areas in the English Community Forestry programme
- Government funding: Countryside Agency
Natural England
- 1990 - Great North Forest initiated
- 1993 – 30 year Forest Plan Government approved
- At its largest – 96 square miles (246 sq km)

Great North Forest: Management and regulation

- Forest Partnership
 - Forestry Commission
 - Countryside Agency – now Natural England
 - Six local authorities
 - Durham County Council
 - City of Sunderland Metropolitan Council
 - Chester le Street
 - Gateshead
 - Tyneside
 - Derwentside.
- 10 year Government stream provides core funding
- Great North Forest employees seconded from the local authorities
- 85-90% of the Great North Forest area privately owned

Great North Forest: Management and regulation

- Constitutionally cannot:
 - buy land
 - operate a payments scheme to encourage owners to give land over to tree planting.
- Role of advisor, enabler and facilitator for communities, organisations and landowners seeking grant aid for forest-related projects.
- Deliberately sought a low profile for its activities in order not to raise unreasonable expectations about the forest amongst local people.

Great North Forest



Great North Forest



Great North Forest



The Central Scotland Forest

- 1990 – initiative
- 620 square miles (1600 sq km)
- Large population centres of Falkirk, Kirkintilloch, Linlithgow, the new towns of Cumbernauld and Livingston, and satellite settlements of Glasgow, such as Coatbridge, Airdrie, Motherwell and Wishaw, lie within forest boundaries
- 750,000 people live within forest boundaries
- Extensive FC plantations

Central Scotland Forest: Management and regulation

- Central Scotland Forest Trust - charitable status
- In partnership with:
 - Scottish Executive
 - Scottish Natural Heritage
 - Forestry Commission
 - Local authorities:
 - Falkirk
 - North Lanarkshire
 - West Lothian.
- Core funding comes from the Scottish Executive and the local authorities.

Central Scotland Forest: Management and regulation

- CSFT is able to use its charitable status to attract external funding
- Able to buy land for regeneration and tree planting projects.
- As the Forestry Commission has such a strong presence in the Central Scotland Forest, the majority of tree planting has been achieved through the Forestry Commission Woodlands Challenge Scheme.

Central Scotland Forest



Issues across three forests

- Fear of forest
 - Vandalism
 - Illegal motor sport
 - Illegal shooting
 - ‘Country sports’ – badger baiting, lamping
- Social exclusion
- Community apathy
- Should money be spent in other ways?
- Opencast continues
- Landfill continues
- Perceived damage to environment by forest projects
- Low visibility of GNF and CSF

Environmental outcomes across three forests

- Countryside & forest parks
- New Tree plantations
 - Community participation programmes
- Tree planting grants for farmers
- Increases in biodiversity
- Reduction in pollution
- Community environmental projects

Social outcomes across three forests

- Community regeneration projects
- Partnership arrangements
- Community volunteers
- Education programmes
- Arts programmes
- Recreation facilities
- Green Gym
- Protest groups – National Forest
- Forest identity created – National Forest

Economic outcomes

National Forest

- Tourism
- Job training orgs and initiatives
- Inward investment – new businesses
- Housing development

Recent History

CFs and Great North Forest

- March 2004 – 10 year Government funding stream for Community Forests to end
- April 2007 – CFs financially independent
- Support from a range of sources
 - national, regional and local government
 - trust funds
 - a variety of new partnerships
- Community Forests Partnership formed

Recent History

CFs and Great North Forest

- Community Forests have either:
 - merged – now 6 members of Community Forests Partnership
 - ceased
 - become charitable trusts
- Great North Forest and Tees Forest merged ➔ North East Community Forests
- August 2008 – proposed merger with Groundwork Trust North East
- But – financial situation poor ➔ North East Community Forests into administration
- Some plots of land sold for development

Recent History

Central Scotland Forest

- 17 million trees planted
 - 16% tree cover
 - 22% target
- 6,800 hectares of woodland created
- 2,000 community events organised or supported
- 960 environmental regeneration projects
- 400 kilometres of paths created
- 300 kilometres of road corridors improved
- 50 kilometres of hedgerows created or restored
- Over 3,100 days of contractor employment was created in 2008/09
- Additional partners

Recent History

National Forest

- 2009-2014 Delivery Plan published
 - 200 - 250ha forest creation pa (204ha achieved)
 - 50ha of nature conservation sites pa (59ha achieved)
 - Secure 150 – 185ha of new and / or planned public access (128ha achieved)
- Forest cover at 18% - from 6% - target 33%
- Increased public participation
- Additional business partners and sponsors
- Exemplar of:
 - the European Landscape Convention (ELC)
 - Sustainable Development
- Tourist development

Lessons Learned?

- Importance of:
- Funding
- Profile
 - Trust
 - Relationships
- Leadership
 - Entrepreneurs