

How to...

create a community woodland group



Who is this guide for?

This is for people who are passionate about their local woodland and want to help improve it for the use of the community.

What will this guide help you to do?

It will help you to identify the steps you need to take to develop the woodland, whether that's finding out who the landowner is and engaging in an already established volunteering group – or setting up your own!

What are community woodlands?

A 'community woodland' refers to any woodland where the local community has some degree of control over how the woodland is run or managed. Such woodlands are usually supported by a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the community group, or it may be managed in partnership with another organization (usually the landowner) through a management agreement.

1 Who owns the woodland?

There are a number of ways you can find out who the land belongs to:

- Check on your local council's website as the first port of call to see if they own and manage the woodland
- The Woodland Trust also has a 'Find a Woodland near me' website which mostly shows publicly owned or public access sites and should list the landowner so you can get in touch to make enquiries [/woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/map/](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/map/)
- Another useful information source is the Forestry Commission as they own and look after lots of woodlands across the region

Still no luck? If your search comes up empty from the above channels, it's likely that the land is privately owned. Details of landownership are generally kept private and it can be

difficult to find out who owns individual pieces of land especially if it isn't owned by a large organisation. The Land Registry keeps records of ownership details but not all land is registered. Checks can be made on the Register but there usually is a fee.

2 Contacting the landowner and getting involved

If you have found out who the landowner is, you can then get in touch and ask if there is already an established group that you could get involved in. There may well already be a 'Friends of' group that you could join, or organisations like ourselves may host one-off volunteering opportunities that you can take part in.

If there isn't an established group or any volunteering opportunities, you'll need to speak to the landowner about whether they would be happy for input into the woodland management from a group. Some councils have Neighbourhood Officers or similar who are there to support interest from local people. You may decide to go down the route of looking to set up your own community woodland group.

3 Assess levels of support

The more community and local support you have for developing the woodland the stronger and more sustainable your group will be. Depending on the numbers of people and the amount of time and effort they can commit will determine whether a group is likely to be sustained over a longer period rather than just coming together for a one-off activity.

Most groups that look to become a 'Friends of' group try and agree on a common set of goals or principles that reflects their interests and what they want to achieve in the woodland – this becomes part of their constitution.

4 Do your research!

If you are looking to set up your own community woodland group you need to ensure you have done your research. Some useful resources are in the box on the right.

Llais y Goedwig the voice of community woodlands in Wales, offers excellent and applicable advice on what a community woodland is, how to create one and the benefits as well as handy resources – [//llaisygoedwig.org.uk](http://llaisygoedwig.org.uk)

The Woodland Trust also offers some information and downloadable advice sheets on the topic – [/communitywoodland.org/advice/your-group](http://communitywoodland.org/advice/your-group)

CASE STUDY: Plumpton clough, Oldham



We worked with an active community group who purchased a small woodland in Oldham.

Plumpton Clough is around 2.62 hectares and comprises grassland and a small woodland leading down to the River Irk. The site acts as a corridor of green space between the busy motorway and local residents.

It's also an important local site for biodiversity and is home to a number of birds, insects and animals, as well as oak, silver birch, beech, pine and ash trees.

In 2014, a group of passionate residents came together to purchase the land from Oldham Council in order to secure its long-term future.

The residents formed 'Plumpton Clough Ltd' – a company owned by its shareholders, in this case around 80 residents that invested from £10 to several thousand pounds.

The City of Trees team worked with the company to help them realise their ambitions and hopes for the land, putting a Woodland Management plan together to ensure it would remain looked after in the long term – especially by future generations.

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