SKYLINE

A project that connects local people with their own surroundings. The most marvellous natural resources with the most fantastic human resources…put those two together and create a new future.
First Minister, Mark Drakeford, 1st August 2019.

…if humankind is to have any hope of finding a sustainable way of life, we must rebuild community. That means giving responsibility for their own place, planning and enterprise back to the people who actually live in the area.
Alastair McIntosh, Soil and Soul

SKYLINE

REPORT ON THE FEASIBILITY STUDY INTO LANDSCAPE-STYLE COMMUNITY LAND STEWARDSHIP IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

November 2019

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I have been a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales since 2014. However, the opinions expressed in this report are mine and not those of Natural Resources Wales.

Chris Blake
The Green Valleys CIC, November 2019

CONTENTS

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

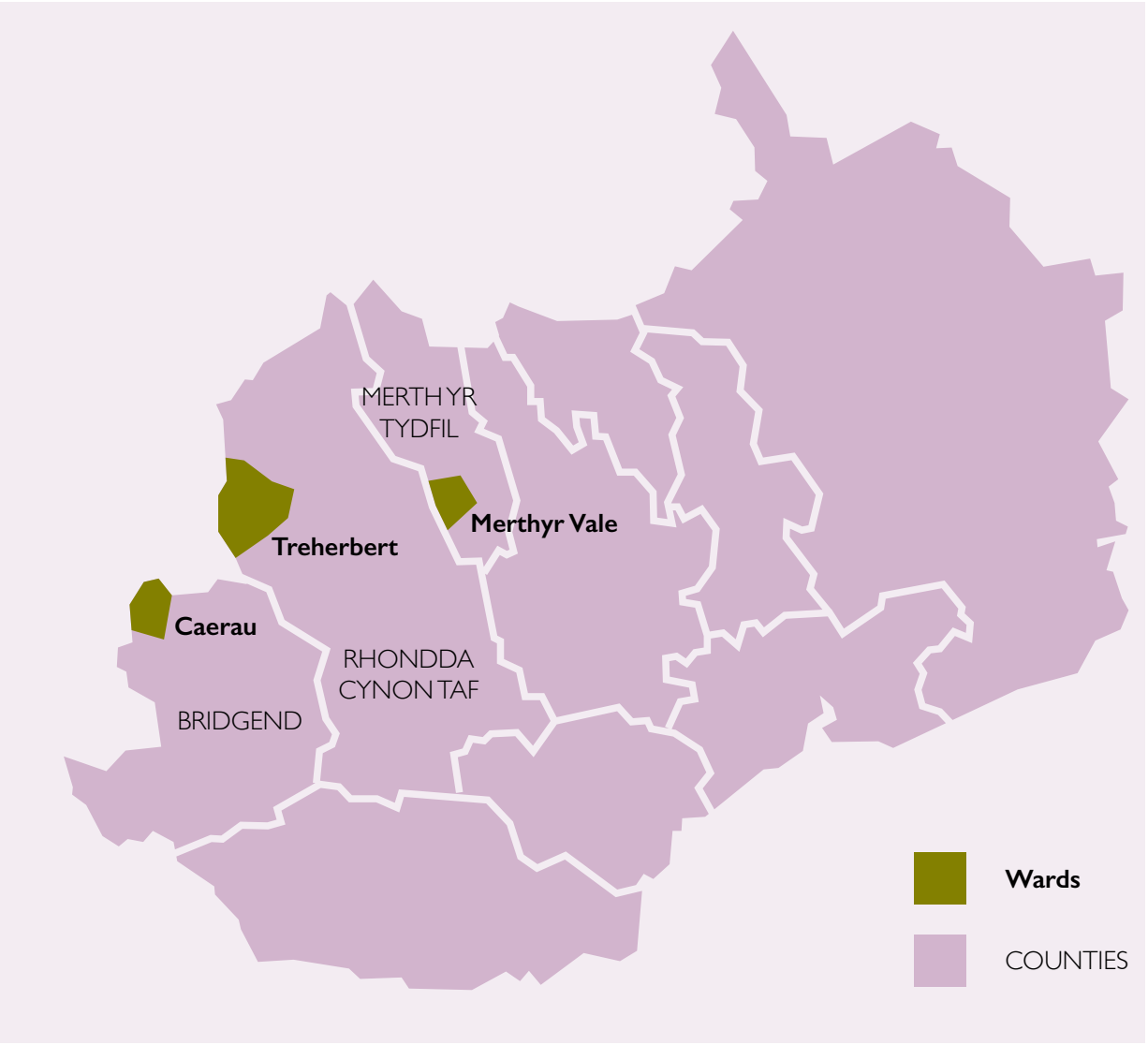
Skyline is about land, people and imagination. Imagining a different future – a future in which land is managed sustainably to meet the needs of the people who live there in a way that doesn't compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Giving communities a connection to landscape that can provide income, jobs, a place of social and cultural activity, and a home for nature.

Let's imagine a Skyline project in 30 years' time. The micro-hydroelectric scheme and the wind turbines sell low-cost electricity to the local community but also light and heat the greenhouses, built on the old colliery site, providing all-year-round vegetables. The forest school building, constructed from timber processed at the community timber yard, is part of the curriculum for all of the schools and colleges and, in the evening, it is the venue for skills training in forestry, horticulture and animal welfare. Children use the woodland as an outdoor play area, young people as somewhere to hang out, and adults can be seen making use of the different paths and trails on foot, on bike and by horse. On the western hillside the conifers were felled a decade ago – partly for income and partly to provide timber for the new building. In its place the new broadleaf woodland now flushes pale green every spring – in another few years it will be coppiced for biomass production. A section of the land nearest the town has been leased in 2-hectare blocks – forest smallholdings that have attracted some new families to the valley. The wilder land to the north is still as it was at transfer, the community meeting next week to discuss plans for its future.

This vision doesn't provide a thousand full-time, paid jobs with secure pensions. But it is, gradually, providing an economic and social link between community and landscape. Incomes can be supplemented, economic activity enhanced, and the community's carbon footprint reduced. Families are more active and reduce their demand on the NHS. Forest fires are a thing of the past. A psychological bond between community, economy and landscape is forged.

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY



SKYLINE – THE FEASIBILITY PROJECT

Skyline is a feasibility study funded by the Friends Provident Foundation. We worked across the communities of Caerau, Treherbert, and Ynysowen – exploring the history, meaning and potential of each place. Exploring the ideas of land stewardship and creating a shared vision for each valley.

What happens if we transfer to the town the rights to use all publicly owned land – not a few hectares for a few years but hundreds of hectares for generations – to the *skyline?*

Specifically, this feasibility study sought answers to 4 questions:

1. Do communities want to be stewards of their landscape?
2. Are there sustainable business models that would allow communities to break free from a culture of grant dependency?
3. Is it possible for communities to manage the landscape in a way that benefits nature?
4. Can these landscape-scale projects be governed well?

This report is an account of the work that was done for this feasibility study. It also provides answers to these four questions and recommends a path for delivering landscape-scale community land stewardship.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OF THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ASKED IN THIS FEASIBILITY STUDY…

Over the course of 12 months, by working with and listening to the communities, and by learning from the experiences in Scotland and elsewhere we were able to conclude that:

- *There was strong support* for the idea of community stewardship in each of the three Valleys. This support grew through the process of engagement and all three now want to take forward landscape stewardship projects.
- *There are sustainable business models* that can provide long-term income to the community and support the local economy through forestry, renewable energy generation, food production and tourism.
- *Each community wanted to protect and enhance the natural environment.* By working with ecologists to understand the rich habitats in the Valleys the community can develop plans that minimise impact from development and provide a better home for nature in the long-term.
- *There is strong evidence that community landscape projects can be governed well over the long-term.*

Recommendation 1: **Public bodies in Wales (including Welsh Government) need to recognise that community stewardship of land offers a significant opportunity to deliver on the promise of green growth – to enhance social, environmental, and economic well-being.**

Recommendation 2: **Welsh Government should support the establishment of two or three pilot landscape-scale, community stewardship projects in the Valleys**

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR SKYLINE

- Landscape-scale community stewardship is putting into practice the Welsh Government's world leading legislation – The Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act including Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy – providing lasting benefits for our communities and natural environment.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS…

- Over the last two decades community land ownership in Scotland has become widespread with over 400 projects together owning over 250,000 hectares.

- The experience from Scotland provides evidence of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. Specifically, "a heightened sense of identity; greater financial viability; improved levels of activity and access to services; increased opportunities for training, jobs and business development; a better physical environment..."[2], are all contributing to a greater sense of well-being.

- Although the Scottish Government strongly advocates community ownership of land (through freehold tenure) there is evidence that other forms of tenure (leasehold or management agreements) can deliver the same multiple benefits provided that the tenure is long-term.

- Evidence from community woodland management in Wales indicates that long-term financial sustainability is built on a spirit of entrepreneurship and is more often achieved through larger holdings.

Recommendation 3: **The proposed pilot projects (Recommendation 2) will need to encompass a substantial area of land (hundreds of hectares) to provide the diversity of opportunities and economic sustainability.**

Recommendation 4: **Any Skyline project will need to be granted long-term tenure on the land (at least 100 years or 3–4 generations).**

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROCESS OF BUILDING A VALLEY…

- Working with artist facilitators was a very effective way of engaging across the community. Helping to remember the past and to imagine a future. Imagining without constraint, uncovering shared values.

- Seeing is believing – probably the single most important thing we did was take people from the communities to see established community forest projects in Scotland.

- The communities' visions for the landscape emerged slowly. They were gradually refined by the constraints of geography, ecology, and economics – advised by the technical team assembled for the project – into a working plan for the first ten years of community control.

- Developing a shared vision for the future of a valley takes time – a minimum of a year. It also takes money to assemble the team that is needed to support the community – artist facilitators, local project management, ecologists, legal advisors, forestry and other technical specialists.

- Skyline is ultimately about a transfer of control. Giving a community control over the landscape that surrounds them. This needs to include control over the process of developing the community vision. But a transfer of control requires both belief and trust.

- Belief in the community's capacity to deliver as well as belief that they will be given the opportunity.

- Trust needs to be established between the community and the landowner and the land manager. From the start of the process the community needs to work closely with the landowner and land manager – a process of building trust that will be essential to make a success of landscape stewardship.

Recommendation 5: **Funding of some tens of thousands (perhaps £50–100k – the cost determined by the scale and complexity of the land under consideration) would need to be made available to fund the development of the landscape vision for each community. This will pay for the facilitation, project management, as well as the technical and legal support needed to deliver a workable plan.**

Recommendation 6: **The community, working in close partnership with the landowners and land managers, should have overall control over the process of developing a landscape vision – a process that could take over 12 months to complete.**

Recommendation 7: **Before the community takes control of the landscape, they need to establish that there is wide community consent for the long-term vision and the 10-year plan. This could be a full community poll (as required in Scotland for projects that have used the community right to buy) or other evidence of wide support.**

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

LAND RIGHTS

- A detailed understanding of each title and its constraints is essential before detailed work on developing new plans can begin.

- The community will require a 'bundle of rights' that will include access, exclusion, management and withdrawal (extraction or harvest in the case of woodland). These rights can be transferred through freehold, leasehold, a management agreement, or a licence.

A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

- It is a mistake to see these post-industrial landscapes as abandoned or of no ecological importance. The coal spoil sites are the home to species of conservation concern. There is the opportunity for land use change to provide spaces and projects for nature's restoration.

Recommendation 8: **In-depth ecological assessments would be needed as the community starts to develop new plans in detail. These assessments will require ecological expertise, but they are also an opportunity for young people to learn about and connect to the landscape.**

1. SKYLINE – THE SUMMARY

LANDSCAPE PLANS

- Some of the visions were strikingly bold – the 200 Ha Cwm Saerbren woodland nature reserve, Caerau's natural burial ground, the Ynysowen Forest Farm.

- The landscape plans covered the full spectrum of Well-being goals. There was very little or no conflict between, for example, the desire to see prosperity and employment and environmental protection.

ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

- There is clear evidence that there are sustainable business models from forestry, renewable energy generation, and food production. These activities can be self-financing when communities have long-term economic rights to land at scale.

- Both Knoydart and Kilfinan Community Forest have been able to deliver sustainable forestry operations and deliver a large number of projects for social benefit.

- There will be entrepreneurial opportunities for both social and private local businesses to operate within the landscape.

HOW SHOULD THE VALLEY BE GOVERNED?

- There is long experience of good governance of community asset projects from Wales and the rest of the UK. Following best practice there should be a strict separation between (volunteer) governance and staff who undertake the day-to-day management and delivery teams with engagement and accountability to the wider community through membership.

- Not all of the activities could or should be delivered by the community organisation that controls the asset. The use of trading subsidiaries and contracting to local social or for-profit enterprises should be encouraged.

- If the land tenure is established using a lease or a management agreement, then careful consideration needs to be given to the conditions that would terminate that agreement. There needs to be a proportionate sharing of the risks between owner and leasee to establish a true long-term partnership.

Recommendation 9: **In the context of the Valleys, leasehold tenure is recommended since it protects the community from potential liabilities resulting from previous industrial use, can establish conditions that could lead to surrender, protecting the landowner and giving the community clarity on the term, rights, and conditions of the agreement.**

Recommendation 10: **The community organisation that holds the land rights should be accountable to its members and the membership needs to be drawn from the wider community.**

STATE AID AND PROCUREMENT

- The State Aid issues that follow from assisting the community to purchase the land outright are significant and, together with other factors, means that we do not recommend freehold tenure by the community.

- A leasehold tenure with nominal (peppercorn) rent does constitute State Aid equal to the commercial rent foregone.

- The procurement issues relating to the granting of management rights to one community group should be addressed through an open application process where the delivery of a range of community and environmental benefits is the key determinant.

Recommendation 11: **Long leasehold is the preferred model of land tenure for community management.**

Recommendation 12: **To address State Aid issues we recommend, in the short-term, limiting the land transferred under a lease such that the rent foregone is under de minimus. For the longer term, the process of full notification to the European Commission should be commenced.**

Recommendation 13: **Consideration needs to be given to the procurement process that gives a community organisation the rights to manage the land.**

Recommendation 14: **A long-term evaluation of (at least) one Skyline pilot should be established to critically evaluate the approach and assess the impact across a wide range of social and economic criteria.**

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

HOW DOES THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS HELP US IMAGINE NEW FUTURES?

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

TREHERBERT
TIME LINE 2000BC – TODAY

2,800 BC Wooded and agricultural area with Neolithic and Bronze age remains. Iron age Roundhouses in Blaenrhondda.

1547
Land in the area granted to William Herbert (above), forebear of the Marquess of Bute, by King Edward VI. Hafotai (summer agricultural dwellings) built in Blaencwm.

1652
Tynewydd long-house built.

1841
Rural community: 218 people residing in the 'Middle hamlet of Treherbert'.

1845
Marquess of Bute Estate buys up local farmland for potential coal mining.

1855
Bute Merthyr Colliery begins production of first Rhondda Steam Coal.

1856
Taff Vale Railway extended from Dinas to serve the pits. Ynysfeio Colliery opens.

1859
North Dunraven (Blaenrhondda) colliery sunk, trading as Cardiff and Merthyr Steam coal company.

1864
Treherbert Railway Station opens.

1865
Ty Draw Colliery opens.

1866
Tynewydd Colliery opens.

1869
Fernhill Colliery opens.

1874
Treherbert RFC founded.

1877
Lady Margaret Colliery opens.

1890
Rhondda and Swansea Railway: Rhondda tunnel constructed.

1890
Treherbert Male Voice Party founded.

1890s
Treherbert Drum and Fife Band (later Glenrhondda Silver Band) forms.

1911
Glenrhondda (Hook and Eye) Colliery (Blaencwm) opens. Tynewydd Colliery closes.

1912
King and Queen visit. Rhondda Tramway Company reaches Treherbert.

1920s
North Dunraven Colliery closes..

1926
Bute Colliery closes.

1938
1,712 men working at Fernhill Colliery; 1,053 at Lady Margaret.

1939
Polikoff clothing factory opens (employs 1,500 at its peak). Miss Polikoff competition.

1940s
Lady Margaret Colliery closes.

1956
Tydraw Colliery closes.

1966
Glenrhondda Colliery closes. Fernhill linked to and accessed from Tower Colliery.

1968
Rhondda Tunnel and rail link to Swansea closes.

1970
Blaenrhondda station closes.

1978
Fernhill Colliery closes.

1989
Burberry takes over the Polikoff factory.

2007
Burberry Factory closes.

2019
Population of Treherbert: 5,727.

2019
Feasibility study for land asset transfer.

2000 BC | 1800 | 1825 | 1850 | 1875 | 1900 | 1925 | 1950 | 1975 | 2000 | 2025






2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

Across the developed world communities are faced with the closure of industries that defined the societies they created. Steelmaking, mining, shipbuilding – industries and societies left stranded as capital seeks higher returns in new geographies.

INDUSTRIALISATION

The South Wales Valleys were sparsely populated until the rapid industrialisation in the 18th Century led to mass inward migration. This rapid population growth took place over two waves: the first occurred from the mid-1700s, as South Wales became the centre of British iron making; and the second from the mid-1800s, when coal was mined in vast quantities. In 1801, the population of South East Wales was around 40,000. By 1861, this had risen to around 210,000. By 1891, it had more than doubled to 485,000, and by 1914 to 885,000[3].

As industrial development continued throughout the 19th Century, the growing working-class population created densely populated but relatively isolated communities. This isolation and the hardships experienced meant that these communities forged strong political and social values of mutual aid and socialism. The necessity of self-help led to the creation of mutual aid societies, non-conformist Chapels, and the birth of the Labour movement. Tredegar's Medical Aid Society, for example, which was funded by weekly small contributions from the workers' wages, was one such society, and Tredegar-born Aneurin Bevan later used it as the model for the NHS[4].

An extensive network of communications was developed to support the industrial, rather than social, expansion of the area. Canals, railways, docks and, most recently, roads were constructed to extract resources. Coal was by far the biggest driver of this development of physical infrastructure. The geography of steep-sided valleys, where all community needs were within walking distance, led to a particularly condensed form of urban development that was typified by the rise of long terraces of housing. This housing was increasingly surrounded by the waste spoils of coal extraction – slag heaps.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

POST-INDUSTRIALISATION

The post-war period was characterised by significant industrial decline. Although economic diversification strategies met with limited success the region was characterised by rising levels of poverty and increased social exclusion[5]. With industrial decline, many communities in the region were increasingly economically and socially disconnected.

Post-war regional decline led to a growing policy interest in place-based regeneration interventions to target government programmes and investment. As early as 1934 South Wales was designated a 'Special Area' as a result of its levels of deprivation; the Welsh Development Agency was established in 1976; the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation in 1987; and the Valleys Initiative Regeneration Programme in 1989. With political devolution there was a renewed interest in social regeneration, and this led to the establishment of the Communities First Programme in 2001 that targeted investment in Wales' most disadvantaged communities[6].

Physical infrastructure has been a consistent feature of regeneration initiatives in South East Wales. The construction and expansion of the M4 in South Wales from the 1960s, and the construction of factory and industrial units during the 1970s and 1980s, were seen as mechanisms to attract inward investment and were often accompanied by other financial inducements to foreign-owned companies.

Over the last 30 years economic and social exclusion has risen significantly. Until recently labour market exclusion was the largest cause of poverty but now 'in-work' poverty has become the primary condition[7]. Such inequalities are the result of the existence of systemic mechanisms of social exclusion that prevent people and communities from engaging as fully productive and active citizens. The South Wales Valley communities are characterised by complex factors of exclusion, including high rates of economic inactivity caused by the decline of traditional employment, high rates of under- and unemployment, low educational attainment, employment skills deficits, poor health behaviours and shortened healthy-life and life expectancy[8].

The three communities included in the Skyline project offer a snapshot of the challenges faced by many others across the South Wales Valleys. Although every place is different, with its own unique set of challenges, assets and opportunities, the three communities nevertheless offer an insight into the South Wales Valleys today. In summary our three communities are all: densely populated; below the median on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation; have life expectancy below the average for their county and Wales as a whole; and have fewer qualifications than the average for Wales.

> *The monolithic presence of coal has given way to a fragmented and pluralistic experience of community, culture and work.*
> *Perhaps the most painful price to pay is the loss of community, and loss of neighbourhood. In a world of strangers we withdraw to our home – a haven in a heartless world.*
> *The jumble of back to back, terraced houses offer a comforting base, private worlds where we can retreat. Faced with defeat we sit at home and watch TV.*[9]
> How Real is My Valley: Postmodernism and the South Wales Valleys

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Following the disaster in Aberfan in 1966 there has been extensive work to redress the impacts of coal mining and heavy industry. Widespread conifer planting has transformed the landscape in the last 50 years. A partial return to the rural pre-industrial landscape that contrasts with the legacy of socio-economic decline. Many Valleys' communities suffer both from social problems associated with urban post-industrial areas, and those of rural isolation[10]. But it has also been noted that, "a significant proportion of people in the Valleys do not recognise, or use, the countryside on their doorstep"[11]. But a community's connection or disconnection to landscape has important consequences for behaviour.

> *…people who are highly connected with their landscapes, understand their value and undertake outdoor activities, such as walking and cycling, as well as in some cases developing potential economic opportunities. Conversely, disconnection is indicated by a lack of identification which, in extreme cases, results in negative, destructive behaviour, such as countryside arson and fly-tipping.*[12]

As this study then concludes, landscape identities in the Valleys are changing rapidly and may be at a tipping point. Although there is continuing discontent with aspects of landscape management there is,

> *…a developing desire and capacity within Valleys communities themselves to participate effectively in the stewardship of natural and cultural heritage assets.*

THE POLICY OPTIONS

For some the failure of regional economic aid suggests that this spending should be reduced or stopped altogether. Whilst it is clear that regional economic aid has not reversed the steady decline of post-industrial communities like the South Wales Valleys, abandoning such communities to their fate is not an option.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

City-regions have become the major focus of economic development intervention. However, there is some evidence that the ability of Cardiff to create sufficient new jobs to provide the additional employment required for Valleys residents is highly questionable.

There has been a more recent attempt to reimagine local economic development on an alternative to the inward investment model. Instead of supporting calls for the concentration of public investment in capital projects or direct subsidies to attract inward investment, these new approaches place more emphasis on what has been termed the 'foundational economy'. Work undertaken at the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC)[13] was at the forefront of this new type of approach, and it defined the foundational economy as:

> *…very large, mostly unglamorous, rather heterogeneous, and [it] is distributed across the country. It is an economy that meets every day needs by providing taken-for-granted services and goods…*

CRESC have argued for the 'grounded city', which places an emphasis on the distribution of mundane good and services essential for civilised life. The grounded city is one that structures social innovation in a way that meets the needs of the local circumstances and offers a response to globalisation. What foundational economics offers is an alternative approach that puts people and place at the heart of economic thinking.

Communities taking the lead in developing business models that can deliver some of the goods and services relevant and useful for their everyday lives. Skyline can make a key contribution to strengthening the foundational economy by giving communities some control over the resources that can deliver some elements of the foundational economy. Adamson and Lang in their Deep Place Study of Tredegar[14], and Lang in the Deep Place Study of Pontypool[15], identified several areas of foundational economic activity that readily lend themselves to sustainable placemaking.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALLEYS

The production and supply of food must form a core part of any sustainable place-making agenda, yet currently very little of the average weekly household spend on groceries is located outside of the major supermarkets. This pattern of distribution has led to an increasing concern about food security and food quality. An alternative approach is emerging. Across the USA, for example, there has been a steady growth in the number of 'food hubs', which are now working to aggregate and distribute 'source-identified' food products. These are significant in the effort to develop local economies, tackle poverty, achieve environmental transition and contribute to the sustainable place-making agenda. Food hubs are also becoming fully commercially viable businesses and are making it possible for smaller agricultural producers to access larger markets[16].

Energy is another core element of the foundational economy, although it is one that is currently dominated by multi-national utility corporations and, as a consequence, is subject to a significant degree of international capital seeking maximum financial returns. Energy conservation and generation offer opportunities, however, to support the development of more sustainable local economies.

CONCLUSIONS

- The long-term support for inward and regional development investment has made little lasting impact to the communities of the South Wales Valleys.
- For those communities at the heads of the valleys, including Caerau and Treherbert, the City Region initiative is unlikely to provide the jobs or the economic stimulus needed.
- The rapidly changing landscape is leading to the creation of new landscape identities and a developing desire for community participation in stewardship.
- There is a renewed focus on supporting the foundational economy. Allowing the income from the production of energy, timber, and food to come under community control will boost the local economy.

3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT LAND STEWARDSHIP SUPPORTS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT?

INTO THE MAINSTREAM

In Scotland, community land ownership is becoming widespread. Since the Isle of Eigg came under community control in 1997 there have been over 400 community land transfers in Scotland, together controlling around 250,000 hectares, around 3% of the land.

Community ownership has become, "a mainstream route to delivering sustainable development for communities across rural and urban Scotland"[17]. It has become, "a normal, designed part of community planning, development, and regeneration".

Community motivations for asset acquisition vary according to asset type and community context, but, "whether intended to deliver employment, housing, education, recreation or amenity, asset ownership is typically a means to an end: addressing community decline and furthering sustainable development"[18].

3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

SOCIAL BENEFITS – THE EVIDENCE

There is a growing evidence base to demonstrate that community ownership can help communities become more resilient and sustainable, and can impact on a range of social, economic and environmental outcomes.

The reported benefits of community control of assets included: "a heightened sense of identity; greater financial viability; improved levels of activity and access to services; increased opportunities for training, jobs and business development; a better physical environment; and enhanced credibility with local authorities and outside agencies. These benefits contributed to a 'social good' of local well-being."[19]

In 2016 The Scottish Government published[20] a review of the work of the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), the organisation that provides grant funding for community land acquisition. When beneficiaries were asked what they considered the main benefit of ownership to be,

> ***the most cited factor, apparent in every case analysed, was an increased sense of being in control of their own futures, which enabled communities to take a long-term and strategic approach to improving sustainable development.***

The same report went on to comment that, "community ownership has been, in every case under study, an overwhelmingly positive factor for sustainable development. No SLF beneficiary spoken to, reported any negative outcomes arising from ownership, and all reported significant improvements in conditions following acquisition."

Community ownership and management of assets can also help to create a stronger sense of community identity and pride and has the potential for increased social cohesion and confidence[21].

One of the more striking findings was the increase in broader civic engagement from residents in communities with community land ownership. Comparing the responses from communities with land ownership with those from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey they found that attendance at a public meeting rises from 29% to 86%, people joining an existing organisation rises from 8% to 34%.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS – THE EVIDENCE

Research undertaken with a dozen landowning community groups, with an average age of 11 years, shows that their turnover (including that of their trading subsidiaries) has increased from £1.7m in their first year of trading to £6.1m in 2012/13 and, that staffing levels have also increased fourfold during this time[22].

The same study, commissioned for Community Land Scotland (CLS) in 2014, showed that there are clear benefits for the wider economy. "Private enterprise has flourished on community-owned estates with the 6 CLS Members who have recorded data for this statistic showing a 123% increase in private businesses operating in their area."

But another clear conclusion is that scale matters. The 'hard' benefits such as investment and jobs, may be achieved more quickly and at scale within larger projects.

3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

DOES OWNERSHIP MATTER?

Scotland's social and economic history has created a powerful drive towards community ownership rather than other forms of tenure. In Wales, with a different history and land ownership that is more widely dispersed, the question does arise as to whether community land ownership, as opposed to stewardship under a lease or a management agreement, is necessary to bring about these financial and social benefits.

The Scottish Government maintains that, there are distinct economic, social and psychological differences between owning land outright (freehold) and being the steward of the land through a lease or management agreement. It then concludes,

> *One of the key benefits of ownership is the higher level of security and control it offers…Although leases, management or partnership agreements are often suitable for communities wanting to undertake certain activities, these can often restrict what community groups are or are not allowed to do, and limit security of tenure. The stakeholders we spoke to highlighted that the higher level of flexibility to develop an asset that ownership affords can also be very important. This can be particularly important in the long-term, as communities' circumstances or ambitions can often change. In this situation, the weakness of a lease or partnership agreement is exposed if the communities' ambitions diverge from those of the owner, and the lease may not provide the flexibility required.*[23]

This is a powerful argument for community land ownership. But, in the South Wales Valleys, the history and context are different. The Scottish land reform movement began with the transfer of large estates from private to community ownership. In Wales, the land under consideration through the Skyline feasibility study is publicly owned. Land that in many cases includes the site of former mines and industrial areas. Both the disposal of publicly owned land (e.g. sections of the forest estate) and the transfer of the potential long-term liabilities of post-industrial land to communities are likely to prove problematic.

Consequently, it may be appropriate to focus on community stewardship of the land – with both the freehold and the ultimate public liability remaining with the State. As we shall see in more detail in Section 6 below, we believe that this can be best achieved through a lease.

But heeding the advice from Scotland about the importance of long-term control we can conclude that any such agreement should be for the long-term (maybe 100 years or more) and that the community should be granted full control over the land including, crucially, the economic benefits that arise.

3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

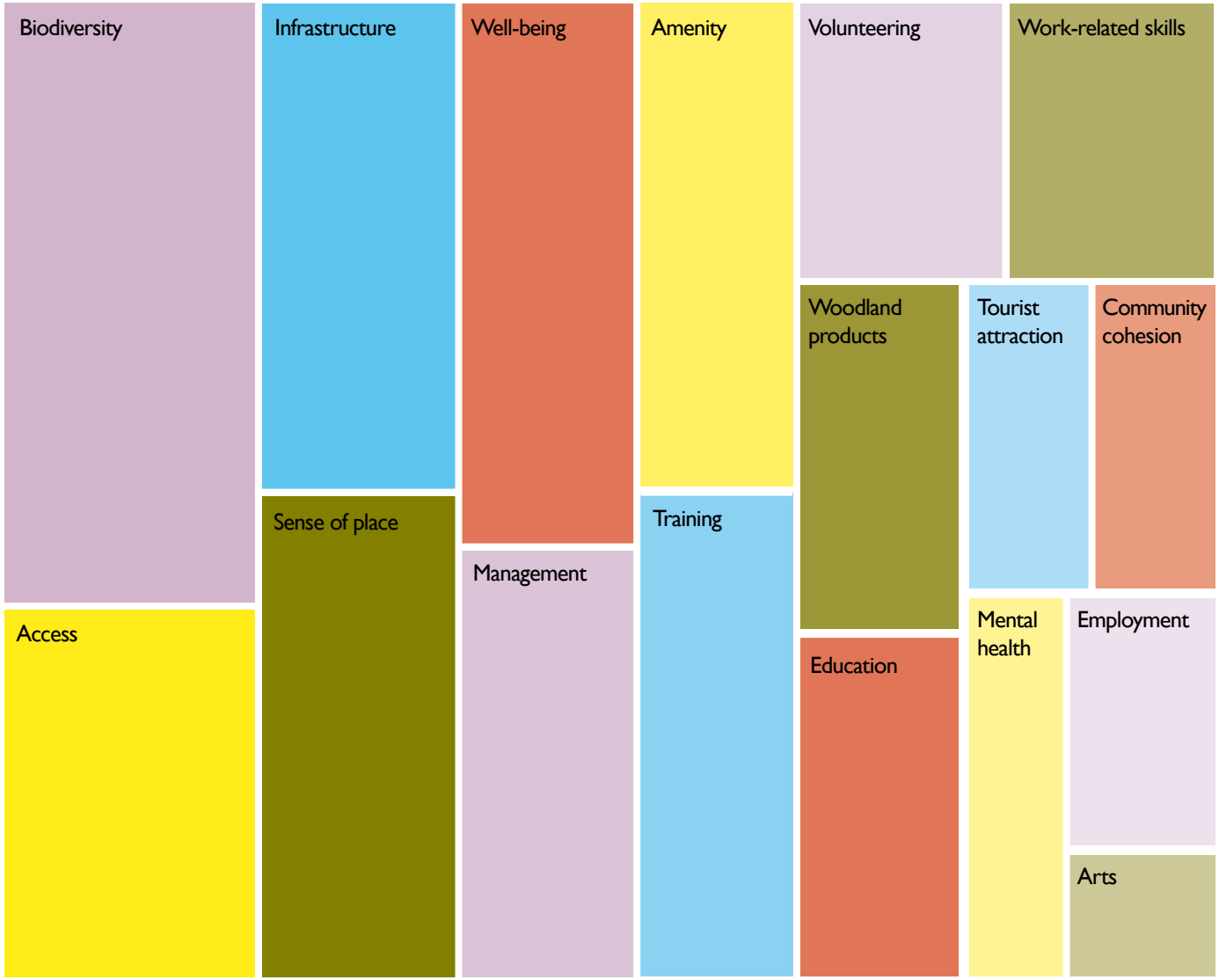
COMMUNITY WOODLAND STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

Although Scotland has two decades of experience with large-scale community land ownership, there is also considerable experience of community woodland management in Wales.

Between 2001 and 2008 the Cydcoed programme injected £16m into 163 community groups across West Wales and the Valleys to support community forestry. The evaluation of that programme[24] concluded that woods were able to deliver health and well-being benefits as well as educational and recreational benefits. The report concludes that, "the key successes of Cydcoed have been the improved social cohesion and social capital"[25].

In 2017 Llais y Goedwig (LlyG) published a report into the economics of community woodland management in Wales[26]. The research identified 138 community woodland groups in Wales but focussed on a detailed evaluation of 15 groups established between the 1990s and 2016.

In contrast to the larger community forest estates in Scotland – some running to hundreds or thousands of hectares – the woodland projects in the Welsh study were typically a few tens of hectares (range 7–125 Ha, mean 34 Ha). Despite the smaller scale, these woodlands are providing a wide range of environmental and social benefits (in the graphic to the right the size of the box indicates the number of responses from community groups delivering each benefit).

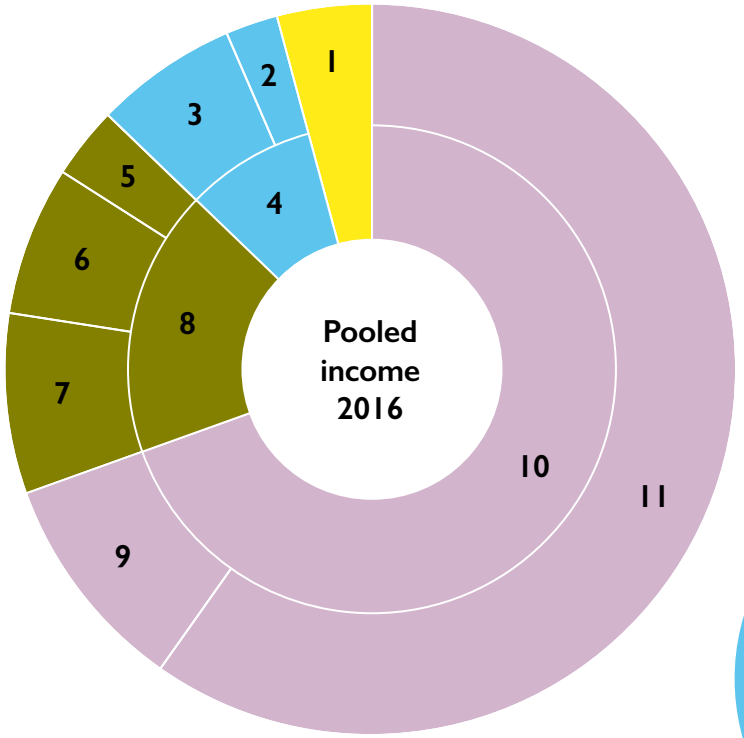


3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

The report also highlighted that the majority of Welsh community woodland projects are run under management agreements, with just 5 of the 15 studied in detail either owned or leased. We can also see that for these smaller woods a diversity of grant income and donations is needed to cover costs.

The importance of income from forestry enterprise does increase with the size of the holding, with the proportion of income from wood products rising from below 20% for woods under 10 Ha to over 65% for woods over 100 Ha.

Generalisations are hard when each holding has different tenure, area, tree species and maturity. They are also managed by groups with different goals and levels of experience. However, the evidence from across the UK is that community management of woodland is widely established and delivering a number of benefits. The economics of small woodland management is challenging and remains dependent on grant income. At the larger scales a diversity of income opportunities are available including timber harvesting.



1. Donations
2. Other
3. Members fees
4. Local fundraising
5. Event fees
6. Contracted services
7. Sales of produce
8. Enterprise
9. Local
10. Grants
11. National

3. LEARNING FROM OTHERS – THE POWER OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

IMPORTANCE OF TENURE

As well as the size of the holding being important, tenure is also a key issue in the delivery of community benefits.

The above interactive graphic[27] from Shared Assets and Making Local Woods Work gives an overview of the activities that are typical in UK community managed woodlands and the tenure agreements that typically underpin those activities. The activities within the darker blue polygon being the ones that require the security of freehold or long-term arrangements.

What is clear is that it is either freehold or long leasehold tenure that underpins those activities with greatest enterprise potential.

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a growing body of evidence from Scotland that large-scale community forest ownership is delivering a range of social as well as economic benefits to local communities derived from traditional, timber-orientated forest management.
- In Wales, community woodland management is also delivering a wide range of social and environmental benefits, although the smaller area of the holdings means there are fewer opportunities for timber-based enterprise.
- The activities with more significant economic impact require either freehold tenure (as seen in Scotland) or long-term leases or management agreements.

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

HOW DOES SKYLINE'S IDEA OF COMMUNITY LAND STEWARDSHIP FIT INTO THE WELSH POLICY FRAMEWORK?

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

SKYLINE AND THE WELL-BEING ACT

In 2015, Wales became the first country in the world to enshrine sustainable development principles into public decision making into law through the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) (Wales) Act[28]. This legislation requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

Skyline offers a model which can help communities realise their ambitions across all of the Well-being goals, but particularly the goals that define a Wales that is "prosperous", "resilient", "healthier", "more equal" and "cohesive".

In 2019, the Future Generations Commissioner is publishing eight 'journeys' in relation to each of the Well-being goals, and 'involvement' (one of the ways of working). These set out steps public bodies should be taking to help maximise their contribution to the Well-being goals.

For example, in the 'journey to a Wales of cohesive communities' (published in October 2019[29]), a simple change identified for public bodies to take includes:

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

> *Map public land to identify and publicise land that is accessible for use by all community groups. Be open to starting conversations with community members and organisations about how to use these.*

A subsequent step identified as "being more adventurous" includes:

> *Be open to starting conversations with community members and organisations about how under-utilised assets owned by the public sector, such as unused land, green space, buildings, could be owned and managed as community assets.*

Skyline also has the potential to contribute directly to at least 15 of the National Indicators and ambitions of the local Well-being plans. As an example, the priorities set out in Cwm Taf's Well-being Plan 2018–2023 speaks to the Skyline agenda.

> *Thriving Communities: To promote safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the well-being of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.*
>
> *Healthy People: People of all ages spend time outdoors, using and enjoying their local environment to improve their health and well-being.*
>
> *Strong Economy: Growth and promotion of tourism using the assets of our beautiful natural environment, heritage and culture for the health, prosperity and benefit of the whole community.*[30]

But significantly, Skyline embodies the five ways of working within the Act: a ***long-term*** planning horizon of up to 100 years; which gives time to ***prevent*** rather than respond to damage; a place-based approach that supports ***integration*** and ***collaboration*** across agencies, and above all the principle of ***involvement***, empowering local people to make the decisions to meet their needs.

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

SKYLINE AND THE ENVIRONMENT ACT

Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act[31] sets out an approach to managing Wales' natural resources in, "a more pro-active, sustainable and joined up way". The Natural Resources Policy (NRP) is a key part of the delivery framework which was established though the Act and outlines the interconnectedness of the quality of our environment with related social and economic factors. It supports the WFG Act by setting out how Wales' natural resources contribute across all the Well-being goals, and sets three interconnected priorities for managing Wales' natural resources sustainably:

- Delivering nature-based solutions – working more effectively with nature to tackle our big challenges.
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency – and setting out a clear pathway for investment in these areas.
- Taking a place-based approach – to respond to local needs and opportunities.

Skyline's place-based approach follows the call of the NRP that,

> *Communities are best placed to shape and understand local priorities and opportunities and to find practical solutions that bring the widest possible benefits. This is also a way that new solutions can be pioneered or piloted. Evidence also shows that local people do not always benefit fully from the natural resources in their locality.*[32]

Specifically, in the section on the management of woodlands and trees, the policy includes the commitment to, "promote increased community ownership or management of woodlands as a local resource"[33].

Increasingly recognised in Welsh Government policy is the principle that environmental sustainability is runs alongside tackling our socio-economic challenges. In addition to the obvious environmental and biodiversity benefits from sustainably managed woodlands, Skyline equips people with the ability to bring the benefits of the NRP into the heart of their communities and can reconnect them with nature, wildlife and energy.

The health and well-being benefits of accessing and using green space is also recognised in the Natural Resources Policy.

> *As health inequalities are significantly reduced in greener areas, this illustrates the close link with poor health, whereas improving this provision can improve health and reconnect people with the natural assets nearby.*[34]

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

Giving communities stewardship of local environmental assets can deliver skills and economic benefits, as well as a positive impact on well-being. Skyline represents a low-risk, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable model for achieving these key policy aspirations and the needs of the local communities.

Like Wales, Scotland's history of community ownership has been relatively short. Although Wales does not have the legislative equivalent to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Welsh Government and local government have been moving in a similar policy direction and have supported community ownership through asset transfer programmes. The Valleys Regional Park, in its 2018 prospectus[35], promotes greater community stewardship of natural assets.

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP IN WALES

Back in 2007 the Quirk review[36] concluded, "the benefits of community management and ownership of public assets can outweigh the risks and often the opportunity costs in appropriate circumstances", and went on to stress that the risks are manageable and can be managed by all parties working together with political will and managerial imagination. But more than a decade on, in 2018, WCVA's Empowering Communities report[37] is still calling for there to be a, "presumption towards community ownership of those assets that communities cherish, and which are deemed to have realisable potential".

The phrase "realisable potential" is key. An asset transferred without the financial means to maintain and develop the asset will quickly become a liability. As Locality concluded in their 2017 report,

> *Not all land and buildings are community assets. We believe that land and buildings are only community assets if they are capable of generating a profit that can be reinvested into activities that benefit the community.*[38]

The same emphasis on income is apparent in the Scottish Community Alliance's Principles of Community Empowerment.

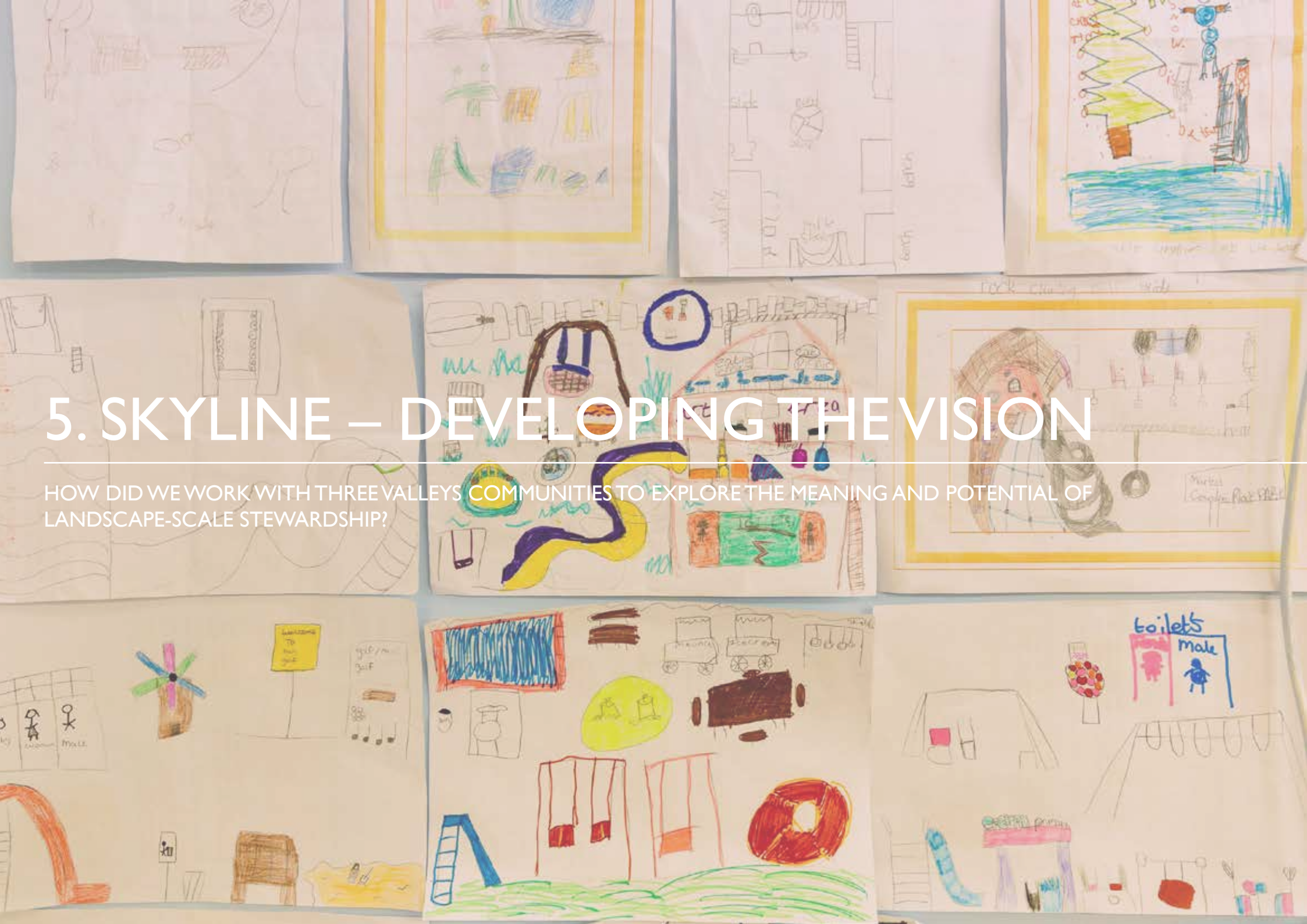
> *Ownership of land and control over land use, and the capacity to generate income streams which are independent of the state, are critical in determining the degree to which a community becomes empowered.*[39]

And this also fits with one of the conclusions of the Welsh Government's Woodlands for Wales strategy published in 2018, which proposes that,

> *Community groups, NRW [Natural Resources Wales], and local authorities and private landowners are able to develop legal agreements, access funding and the support required to increase the variety, longevity and depth of community management agreements, woodland enterprise opportunities and to support community ownership of woodlands.*[40]

CONCLUSIONS

- The central proposition of Skyline – community stewardship of public land – is entirely aligned with the legislative and policy framework in Wales.
- No legislative change would be necessary to deliver some of the social and economic benefits that we have seen in Scotland.
- There is growing evidence that successful community asset transfer projects require assets that are capable of generating income to cover costs.
- Public bodies in Wales, supported by Wales' unique legislative and policy frameworks, must be encouraged and empowered to support increased community stewardship of public land.



5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

HOW DID WE WORK WITH THREE VALLEYS COMMUNITIES TO EXPLORE THE MEANING AND POTENTIAL OF LANDSCAPE-SCALE STEWARDSHIP?

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

We worked with three communities, each in different local authorities, Treherbert in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerau in Bridgend, and Ynysowen within Merthyr Tydfil.

The communities were chosen because each had nearby publicly owned land and a local community organisation willing to engage with the feasibility study. In Treherbert this was Welcome to Our Woods, a partnership that had been operating for nearly a decade and had a long and successful history of community projects in the forest.

For Caerau and Ynysowen we worked with the teams established by the Building Communities Trust[41] – Invest Local Caerau and Invest Local Ynysowen. It is important to note that although we worked closely in partnership with these three community organisations, Skyline was an independent project and was not managed by these organisations.

PROJECT DELIVERY PARTNERS

In addition to the support of the three communities, we assembled a project team of experts and facilitators to help us answer the questions we had set ourselves. The project was funded by a grant from Friends Provident Foundation and the work took place between July 2018 and May 2019. The Green Valleys CIC was the grant recipient and provided the project management. Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University offered support on governance and allowed us to draw on their deep expertise in place-making. Shared Assets advised on models for community land management that are sustainable and productive – highlighting examples that create livelihoods, enhance the environment, and involve local people in making decisions about the places they care about. The Gwent and South and West Wales Wildlife Trusts shared expertise on habitats and the wider ecology. Stephens Scown LLP advised on land titles and legal structures. PEAK (Treherbert), Larks and Ravens and Mark Lang (Ynsysowen/ Caerau), and Cynnal Cymru

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

(Caerau) were skilful and thoughtful facilitators, working with each community to help us explore the past, present and possible futures of each Valley. In addition, we were very grateful for the energy, insight, and support of Gloria Giambartolomei, a PhD researcher (from Coventry University, part funded by the Welsh Government) working full-time with the project.

We were also guideded by a Steering Committee with representatives from Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government, Valleys Landscape Park, Future Generations Commissioner's Office, Development Trust Association (Wales), WCVA, Social Farms and Gardens, Llais y Goedwig, Cwm Harry Land Trust, micro business lender Purple Shoots, Welcome to our Woods (Treherbert), and the Building Communities Trust partnerships. We also benefitted from having Mike Erskine to photograph and video the process – his photographs illustrate this report.

METHODOLOGY

The project was initially divided into 5 separate workstreams.

(WS1): ***A shared vision*** – How would our pilot communities want to shape the landscape that surrounds the town if they had long-term control? Capturing and mapping the various visions for a future landscape from an artistic, cultural, recreational, commercial perspective. To develop these visions, we used three different facilitators – one in each community: PEAK (Treherbert), Larks and Ravens and Mark Lang (Ynsysowen/ Caerau), and Cynnal Cymru (Caerau). This was a deliberate strategy as we wanted to explore different approaches in each community.

WS2: ***Business models and financial sustainability*** – review the experience from social and private enterprises that have been developed on community-managed land across the UK. Which activities and which governance models have the best prospects of long-term sustainability within the Valleys context? Shared Assets were the lead on this workstream.

WS3: ***Ecological impact*** – what might be the ecological risks and benefits of changing from current land use patterns to those being considered under community management. How can we implement the community vision and result in a net enhancement of the natural environment? The Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales led on this workstream.

WS4: ***Governance*** – what are the possible options for the successful governance of community land assets? What should be the relationship between the day to day management of the land asset, the governance structures, and the local elected officials? The Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University, led on this workstream.

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

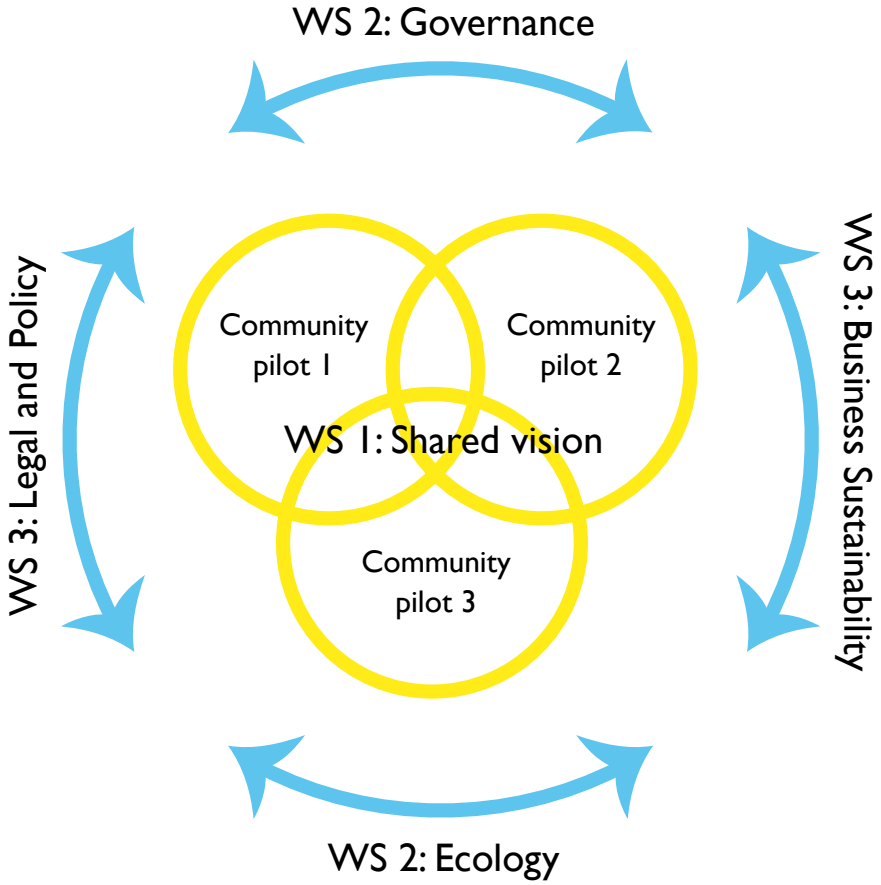
WS5: ***Policy and legal frameworks*** – understanding the legal status of publicly owned land in South Wales, the legal options for transfer under a long-term lease, conditions and obligations on the community land manager. Stephens Scown LLP advised on the legal component of this work. Lucie Taylor of Social Farms and Gardens advised on the planning implications.

However, it is not possible to deliver such a complex project in isolated workstreams. In reality, and contrary to the implication of the neat process diagram (right), it was a complex iterative process and the emergence of a shared vision for the future of each valley depended on constant input from each of the expert partners and further reflection to distil a community vision.

Our approach to the community engagement was influenced, by Alastair McIntosh's ***rubric of community regeneration*** outlined in his book ***Rekindling Community***[42]. A process which starts with, "re-membering that which has been dismembered; re-visioning how the future can be; and finally, re-claiming what is needed to bring it about".

Also, by using arts-based facilitators in Treherbert (PEAK) and Larks and Ravens (Ynysowen and, later in the process, in Caerau) we allowed a different approach to develop in each place. Responding to opportunity rather than following a prescribed engagement plan. We were using artist facilitators to support the expression for memories, hopes, and dreams for the future of each valley.

Our goal was end up with a vision for the future of each valley. A vision that would capture ideas and dreams of as wide a cross-section of the community as we could gather. But it also had to be a vision that was informed by the constraints of geography, economics, and the need to create a better home for nature.



Because each community was working with a different facilitator and each community brought very different levels of experience, the journey in each community was unique. Consequently, there is not one common process that was followed, but we have distilled the core elements of the process the key activities in the following table.

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

RE-MEMBERING	SUMMER 2018	Kick-off meetings	An initial meeting with the anchor organisation in each community to explain the vision, scope and approximate timing of the work.	
		Skyline team activity	Preparation of land ownership maps | Collating information on ecology, vegetation, conservation status. | Artist / facilitator activities. Dream catching in Ynysowen **(see box 1)**, Caban Sgriblio (see box 2).	
		1st design meetings	**INPUTS** 1. Ideas from the initial community activities. 2. Ecologist insight into the valley. 3. Example business models from other community projects. 4. Land Registry maps of ownership.	**OUTPUTS** A vision for the future of the valley. A long-list of potential activities in the valley. Provisional location of activities based on geography, ecology, ownership.
RE-VISIONING	AUTUMN 2018	Skyline team activity	Visit to Scotland – community-managed forest projects **(see box 3)**. | Postcards from the future. | Festival of ideas (see box 4). Engaging the primary school. | Collecting evidence from other projects on the long-list activities. | Initial ecology impact assessments and mitigations. | Background review of governance models. | Detailed review of land title including restrictive covenants etc.	
		2nd design meetings	**INPUTS** 1. Long-list of activities from the 1st design meeting. 2. Ecologist initial impact assessments and mitigations. 3. Evidence from other communities on successful and unsuccessful business models. 4. Detailed coupe maps from NRW. 5. Details of land ownership – leases, restrictive covenants.	**OUTPUTS** A short-list of activities for the first 10 years of community stewardship. Each activity located on a plan of the valley creating a draft valley map. Activities were divided into those which are economically self-sustaining (e.g. forestry), and those which meet social needs (e.g. community orchard).
RE-CLAIMING	WINTER 2018	Skyline team activity	Preparation of provisional, 10-year landscape plans. | Evaluating costs and business models. | Ecological impact assessments and mitigations.	
		Sharing / validating	Sharing the landscape plans across as wide an audience as possible.	

BOX 1

DREAM CATCHING IN YNYSOWEN.

Delivered by Larks and Ravens.

Our core philosophy and approach is informed by the idea that doing and action changes thinking and creates energy and agency for new possibilities. Over a period of three months we made ourselves visible and available and started to have conversations. As artists, we saw ourselves as guests inviting curiosity, rather than as consultants. Sometimes we worked at a distance examining an overview of the area, other times we engaged directly with anyone and everyone we met. Catching dreams on a wet Sunday we met and talked to people at the Community Centre, on the streets, at the Ex-Service Men's Club, the Daggers.

Within our limited time and listening to older members of the community, we decided to focus our efforts to engage with younger people, specifically teenagers. Our thinking is that if younger people are empowered to design their dreams for a future of their community, which might include Skyline, then older people would begin to engage.

Ynysowen needs more time and more opportunity in imagining and dreaming futures and gaining the confidence to make them happen. At present the skyline feels abstract and possibly irrelevant.

Perhaps Ynysowen needs less consultancy and more 'let's do something and see what happens'. Doing stuff builds energy, imagination, confidence and relationships.

But people need a motive to go into the hills – and something to do when you get there, even if it is only a place to stand and stare.

The young people feel un-listened to, un-catered for, and criticised for being noisy, in effect doing what young people do – they desperately want facilities where they can hang out and enjoy and find things to do.
There is real energy to tap here.

BOX 2

CABAN SGRIBLIO

Delivered by PEAK

Caban Sgriblio is a Peak project, supported by BBC Children in Need, that uses creative writing to develop confidence and communication skills, bringing children and young people together with professional writers. For Skyline, our aim was to give a group of Treherbert children the skills and confidence to describe their hopes for the future of their town, to trust their own voice and to have the confidence to share their ideas through poetry.

On four Monday afternoons, we met with 10 Treherbert schoolchildren, writing together and drawing inspiration from the Autumn landscape. Taking time to observe the environment – blackberries, horse chestnut leaves, the river that runs through the valley – we focused on our five senses, painted pictures with words and searched for new and original ways of describing the colours of Treherbert:

Valley's Palette

Yellow: Number plate yellow, Sun ice-cream yellow
Green: Lime green, Poisoned ivy green, Grass green, Spring green, Summer green

We read and enjoyed poems together, each child reading a line aloud until the rhythm of the poem became their own and they were ready to imagine the future of their Valley. "I will put in my box for the Future of Treherbert, the whistle of a bus, a sweet from my favourite sweet shop. A fish from the fish farm. I will put a choir, a new mine shack and horse riding lessons."

Individual voices emerged as their confidence grew, reflecting each child's interests and values: "I will put in my box the skate park around the corner, and adventure park too, the skeleton of a brand new dinosaur and don't forget the bakers too."

The children presented their poetry at the Festival of Ideas: line-by-line through woodland performances, where they collaborated with a proud grace and confidence, and on large sheets of paper displayed during the community feast and mapping workshop. Their personal vision was seamlessly interwoven into a shared vision for their community.

BOX 3

SCOTLAND VISIT

Delivered by Skyline team

In October 2018 we took a team of 15 to Scotland to see what some established community forest projects had been achieving.

We visited Kilfinan Community Forest, Argyll, and North West Mull Community Forest. Both had taken over forest blocks previously managed by Forestry Commission Scotland. 350 hectares at Kilfinan, 750 hectares in Mull. What we found was inspirational: forest crofts, sawmill, hydro-electric power, forest school activity area, community polytunnel, 5 new social housing units built from local timber, skills training for young people, and golden eagle nests!

"Seeing communities operate at the landscape scale was revolutionary for me. It completely changed my way of thinking about what is possible in the future", Ian Thomas, Treherbert.

"I came back so positive from Scotland. Seeing, if communities work together, what you can achieve", Jennifer, Caerau.

BOX 4

FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

Delivered by PEAK

In Treherbert, Arts organisation Peak worked with Creative Producer, Melissa Appleton and Artist, Owen Griffiths, practitioners whose work uses immersive, collaborative techniques to create shared social spaces and enable rich conversations. Their approach is informed by a belief that a cultural lens is critical in the work of community and climate.

Griffiths and Appleton devised a programme of artist-led workshops and events, culminating in a 'Festival of Ideas' in Autumn 2018. It brought together over 100 people to share a walk, food and conversation about Treherbert and its environment, encouraging them to consider the valley as a resource of natural assets and a tool to generate imaginative ideas.

Appleton and Griffiths transformed a familiar community building into a dining and workshop space. Provocations from Sakina Sheikh, a fossil fuel divestment campaigner with Platform London, and Carys Roberts, a policy advisor with 'Shared Assets' framed the workshop. Large-scale text, declaring 'Climate is Culture' and 'Culture is Ordinary' along with drawings, maps and children's poems created an installation of rich ideas.

These catalysts, celebrating the people and places of Treherbert, facilitated community mapping of historical and contemporary narratives of village and landscape. Synthesised into densely layered maps combining geological and landscape features with cultural and human events, these became a working tool and foundation for future work. Three further mapping workshops, held during Winter 2018/19, developed landscape-scale proposals around three key themes: economy, ecology and the everyday.

In Spring 2019 Appleton, Griffiths and Peak curated and produced a Sharing Event and exhibition for the three pilot Skyline communities in a disused shopping unit in Cardiff. Attended by over 100 people, the event began the development of a working language and aesthetic for future Skyline work.

This valley is our resource

This place, this land, this future

The soil, the rivers, the hills

Imagine all we took was returned

Mining the Imagination not the land

Sustaining community identity

Re-modelling community ownership

Let the work of re-imagining begin!

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

Working with a community to develop a 10-year landscape plan was not something any of us had done before. The activities we undertook were limited by three factors. Firstly, time – the entire Skyline feasibility project had to be completed in 10 months. Secondly, budget – we had to ration the number of days from our facilitators and technical experts across the three projects. And lastly, because it was a feasibility study, we were not in a position to hand over the landscape for community management at the end of the work. We received generous and committed contributions from the three communities but there is clearly a difference between working on a feasibility study and designing a landscape plan that can be implemented.

I have set out below the key lessons learnt from the process of developing landscape plans for the Skyline feasibility project. In Section 11, ***How to Build a Valley,*** we use this experience to describe a process for landscape planning.

1. To develop a live landscape plan requires more time and paid technical input than was available for the feasibility study. For the feasibility study we had approximately 6 months and £25,000 for each community, including overall project management. 12–18 months and approximately 2–3 times the budget would be necessary to compete a proper process for one community, although the actual cost will depend on the scale and complexity of the land under consideration.

2. Using artist facilitators to work with the communities was very beneficial. Starting conversations and engaging the heart and the imagination were vital steps in developing trust and exploring the Skyline vision.

3. Taking community members to Scotland to see established community forest projects was a turning point. It turned an abstract idea into something real, "If they can do that, then we can too."

4. Assembling the technical experts on forestry management, successful business models, ecology, and land law was vital. But this technical expertise must be used to serve and not lead the plans and visions of the community.

5. You need to work with a very wide cross-section of the community. This takes time and effort but is vital if the resulting plans are to have wider acceptance.

5. SKYLINE – DEVELOPING THE VISION

6. Every community is different. Different history, different personalities, and different levels of experience of managing community projects. Your process must be flexible enough to adapt to each situation.

7. A successful community land project will require leadership from within the community. Those leaders, committed to making it happen, may already be identified, or they may slowly emerge through the landscape design process. But ultimately, land stewardship will only be delivered with committed community leadership.

8. Engaging with people of working age was hard. Working with children (they are told to) and retirees (had time) was much easier. But we think that this may be easier when the outcome of the work are jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities rather than a feasibility report.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DESIGN PROCESS

All three of our communities had no difficulty in instinctively balancing the sometimes conflicting goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Jobs and business opportunities were important but so were resilient ecosystems and the delivery of social and cultural benefits. There was no suggestion of focussing on one goal (e.g. income or jobs) at the expense of others.
In each of the communities, the older age group fully embraced the challenge of envisioning a landscape for the next 3 generations, a landscape they would never see.

It is vital that the communities are given the full economic interest in the land – not just access or limited management rights. Without the economic rights the exercise becomes a wish list for future funding applications (disabled access, a forest school, a community orchard). Full economic interest in the land (with sustainable business models) gives the opportunity to create a self-financing community for the long term.

The key issue we took from the process is that Skyline is about a transfer of control. It is about the community taking control of the landscape, for the long-term. But this also presents one of the biggest challenges. Decades of top down regeneration work and remote decision making have left communities without the belief that they can drive lasting change. We think it vital that transfer of control is not compromised in delivering the first projects.

CONCLUSIONS

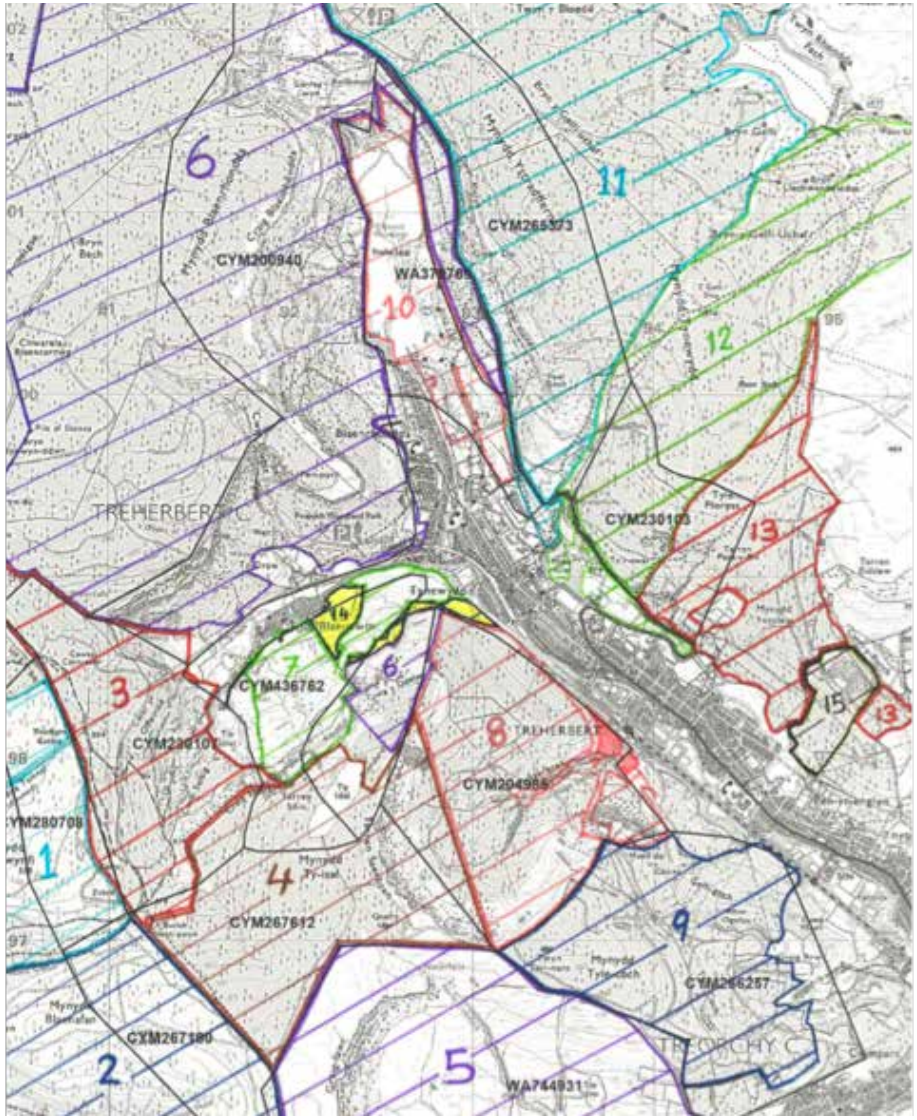
- By the end of the process the community members who had engaged with Skyline were strong advocates of community stewardship.
- The artist facilitators were a powerful tool in exploring both the past and the future.
- The engagement process needs the flexibility to respond to each communities' history and capabilities.
- Sharing is believing – the trip to see community forest projects in Scotland created the self-belief that change was possible.

THIS WORK UNLEASHED SOME POWERFUL DREAMS. NEW DREAMS.

6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS

HOW DOES LAND TITLE AND PLANNING POLICY INFLUENCE FUTURE LAND USE?

6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS



The next task was to match these landscape dreams against the constraints of geography, land ownership, land use policy, and ecology. In this section we look at the ownership of the land around the towns and the implications of planning policy. In the next we look at how the visions were shaped to fit within environmental constraints.

PUBLIC LAND SURROUNDING THE TOWNS

Many of the Valleys towns are surrounded by public land.

This map (left) was created with information from the Land Registry and illustrates the position for Treherbert. With the exception of the title marked 10, the old Fernhill colliery site, all of the land is in public ownewrship. The title marked 5 is owned by the local authority, and that marked 7 is owned by the Coal Authority – the rest of the numbered titles are owned by the Welsh Government. It is a similar position in Ynysowen and Cearau – a mosaic of large holdings owned by the Welsh Government, the Local Authority, and the Coal Authority.

6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS

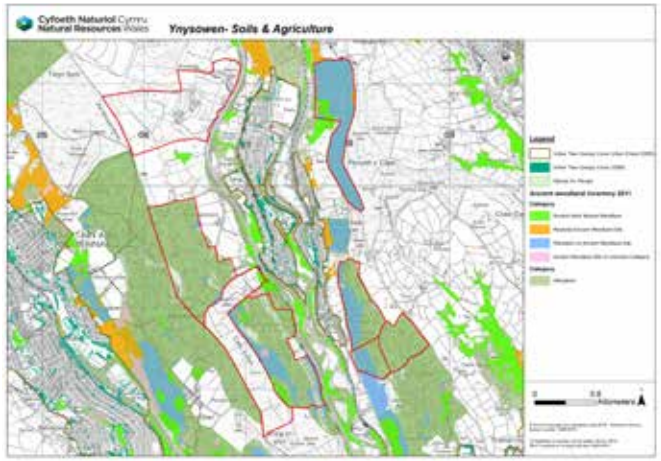
UNDERSTANDING THE LAND

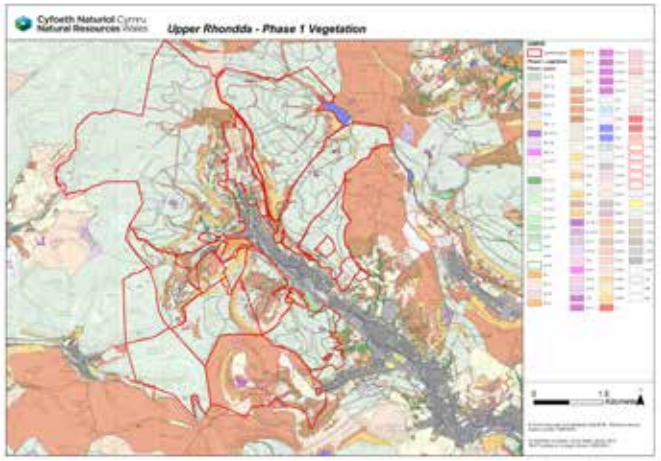
Focussing on the land in public ownership we were able, with the assistance of Natural Resources Wales, to map the land against a number of datasets to help us understand current use, history, flood risk and scientific designations, and many other factors. A selection of the output maps for each of the three areas is shown right. The red lines mark the edges of registered land in public ownership in the three communities.

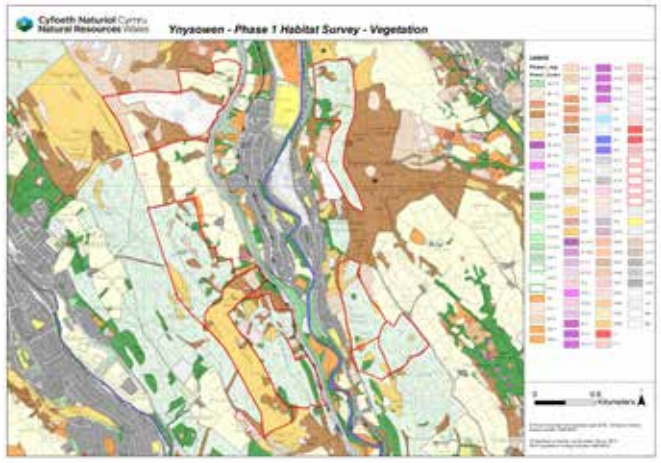
This information was to used to help the communities and the Skyline team understand the landscape and to locate and prioritise the specific activities that had been proposed.

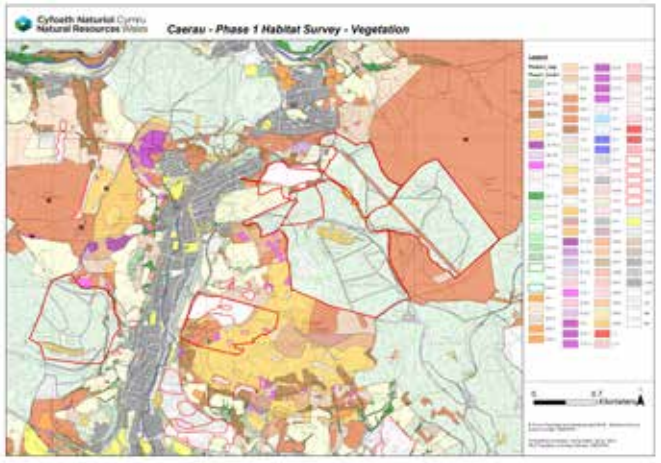
LAND TITLE

The majority of the land around each town is registered. We used Stephens Scown LLP to undertake preliminary title searches for the public land. We do not have space here to document the details for each title but what follows is a summary of the issues and restrictions that this search revealed to illustrate both the potential and the challenges for community stewardship.









6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS

Unregistered land	One title is a leasehold title granted out of an unregistered freehold title. Further enquiries would need to be conducted as to the owner of the freehold title and any rights or restrictions which	burden the land. We would also need to obtain the lease under which the title is held in order to establish, in particular, whether there are any restrictions on use or assignment.
Leases	There are long leases granted on three titles with the terms ranging from 99 years to 999 years. We would need to obtain these leases in order to ascertain whether they are assignable or	terminable and whether there are any restrictions on use of the land.
Unilateral notices	Several of the titles are subject to unilateral notices in respect of option agreements for renewable energy projects. These option agreements present a substantial risk unless these companies are involved in the	project or they have been exercised (which is possible as the wind farm is now operational). We would need to obtain and review the agreements to ascertain what rights have been granted and under what circumstances they may be exercised.
Rights reserved	In several cases the land is subject to rights reserved by deeds and conveyances. In some cases, the rights are noted on the title and include rights to use or install drains under the land, sporting rights, limitation of the use of the land to agriculture or forestry purposes, and the right to develop adjoining land. In other cases, the land has no right to air or light. Where the rights are not detailed in the title and documents are referred to, these will need to be reviewed in detail, in particular as to whether there are any restrictions on sale or use or any	rights exercisable over the land which could interfere with the intended use. In some cases, the documents are not available at the Land Registry, in which case consideration will need to be given as to whether appropriate Unknown Risk Indemnity Insurance is available at a commercially viable rate. There are also restrictions on the use of several titles, including prohibitions on use for the killing of animals, public entertainment and public worship, advertisements and caravans. There is a prohibition on title concerning the erection of any building.
Mining reservations	Mines and minerals together with ancillary powers of working are excepted from several titles. In most cases there is no provision for payment of compensation by the beneficiary in the event of	damage. If exercised, these rights could cause substantial damage and loss, and insurance would therefore be advisable.
Leases of easements	Several titles are subject to a lease of easements. From the details provided it appears that it is the same lease of easements applying to several titles. This could either relate to a grant of	easements for a term of years, or a sub-grant, for a term of years, of an existing easement.
Restrictions on title	In some cases, there is a restriction on title. The restriction requires a certificate signed by the proprietor of specified land that the provisions of a Deed of Grant have been complied with. We will need to obtain and review the Deed of Grant to ascertain what is required and whether the restriction can be complied with. Some of the titles have limitations on their permitted use. In particular for one title it cannot be	used for establishing businesses making or selling alcohol, butchers' businesses or any other noisome business, and all watercourses are excepted from the title. One title is subject to grazing rights. The relevant documents should be obtained and reviewed.

This clearly demonstrates that even for registered land under public ownership the position can be complex. It is therefore essential that the legal position of the land is properly understood before the community invests time in developing specific plans.

6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS

COMMUNITY RIGHTS AND THE NEW COMMONS

The community management of land can be understood as a 'common'. It is useful to draw a distinction between 'traditional forest commons' and 'new community woodlands' to help understand the relationship between the community and land.

Traditional forest commons have their roots in the middle ages and are a means of either collective ownership or stewardship with rights inherited and passed on over generations. They are self-financing and the benefits are shared. The management rules are derived from traditional practice and are self-managed, although these rules are now usually nested within national legal systems.

The new commons, such as community woodlands, will typically arise through a process of collective action and will enshrine the rights to access, withdrawal (economic value), and the right to manage for the long-term. They are explicitly managed as multi-purpose forests which, alongside timber production, will also be managed for conservation and recreation.

Community stewardship of a forest, or any land, requires a 'bundle of rights'. The rights that allow the community to realise economic and social benefits are:

- Access: Access rights allow a community and its members to enter a forest area.
- Exclusion: Exclusion is the ability to refuse another individual, group, or entity access to and use of a particular resource.
- Management: Specifying the scope and limits of the communities' ability to manage the forests for their own objectives.
- Withdrawal: Withdrawal rights are the right to benefit from forest products, for subsistence or commercial purposes.
- Alienation: The right to alienate a property is the right to transfer the rights to another entity.

For new community woodlands in the UK, rights are usually non-transferable. The right of Alienation of the land is limited through an asset lock written into the constitution as required for charity, Community Interest Company or Community Benefit Society.

And lastly some consideration of duration. It is important that the community management regime plans for long-term sustainability – ecological and financial. But forest harvest cycles can be 50 years or longer. We therefore recommend that the minimum duration for the transfer of these rights should be 100 years – 3 to 4 generations.

6. UNDERSTANDING LAND RIGHTS

PLANNING POLICY

Any future land use will have to comply with local planning policy. Most of the land under consideration will be outside of the settlement boundaries. The policies vary in each authority but, as an example, the emerging Local Development Plan for Merthyr 2016-2031[43] advises that development will only be allowed outside of settlement boundaries if [an edited list]: it is for agriculture or forestry, associated with rural enterprises, supports the expansion of an existing business, is for low-impact tourism, is for renewable energy, is for affordable housing, is for low-impact One Planet Development. There are similar exceptions within the policies for the other authorities. Although the communities' development plans were not developed with specific consideration of the planning policies it can be seen that most of the proposals would fit within the criteria listed.

CONCLUSIONS

- A detailed understanding of each title and its constraints is essential before detailed work on developing plans for future land use.
- Full use should be made of the detailed spatial information that NRW and the local authority hold.
- The community will require a 'bundle of rights' that will include access, exclusion, management and withdrawal. These rights can be transferred through freehold, leasehold, a management agreement, or a licence.
- We believe that a long leasehold (for example, 100 years) maybe the best option for the communities in this study. The community gets long-term right to manage, but it also protects them from some of the liabilities that may come with freehold tenure. For the landowner the asset remains within public ownership and the provisions of the lease can give some control over activity on the land. But it should be noted that the most appropriate tenure and management regime will vary from place to place – there isn't a single solution for all situations.

7.A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

CAN WE BREAK THE TRADE-OFF BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND A DEGRADED ENVIRONMENT?

7. A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

Can the community change the way that land is used in the valley to provide a better home for nature? Throughout the project we worked with the Gwent and the South and West Wales Wildlife Trusts to help us understand the habitat around each town and to ensure that this knowledge informed our decision making.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

The ecology of the South Wales Valleys has always reflected the region's socio-economic history. In the pre-industrial era the Valleys were dominated by extensive agriculture (lowland and upland) and broadleaved woodland, and would have carried a significant assemblage of species and habitats. From the middle of the 18th Century, the development of industrial coal mining, associated heavy industries (iron then steel) and their rail and road infrastructure had a significant negative impact on the region's ecology. The rapid process of urbanisation and inward labour migration led to further habitat loss.

In addition, pollution and acidification would have had a negative impact for many species.

The abandonment of industrial land and the subsequent processes of natural regeneration have seen a wide array of species and habitats develop across the region. As biodiversity loss has accelerated across much of the UK's farmed environment through agricultural intensification, the biodiversity and ecology of the South Wales Valleys could be described as being in relatively good health.

The challenge laid down for community plans within the Skyline project is to find ways that economic regeneration and community cohesion can be enhanced without a reversal in the ecological fortunes of South Wales. The three Skyline communities are important test cases that can enable us to explore the possibility of meaningful sustainable development, environmental growth and the well-being of future generations.

The current landscape can lack identity and this can lead to perception of abandonment. As the landscape recovers, the need to reinstate some management to maintain the diverse ecology becomes more important. In some areas the landscape suffers from antisocial behaviour such as fly tipping, off-road bikes and arson leading to large wildfires.

Detailed analysis of the ecosystems and habitats of the communities' landscapes are not available at this time. In depth ecological studies will need to be undertaken

7.A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

where general or historical surveys indicate particular ecological interests or sensitivities. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are identified in all three areas and provide an important framework for wildlife and ecosystem provisions. Designated nature conservation sites, such as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), while providing a core of statutorily protected sites for biodiversity in all three areas, have very limited coverage both in extent and the conservation features they represent. These sites need to be conserved and protected for their intrinsic and ecological worth. However, effective wildlife and nature provision, depends heavily on the network of non-statutory SINCs which local authorities have identified and the areas of habitat that connect them, 'filling in the gaps'. This network needs to be understood and appreciated at the start of the conversation so that inappropriate development doesn't start to undermine the concept of 'ecosystem provision'.

ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SKYLINE

There are common features in the habitats and species present in the three Skyline areas. However, topography, type/extent of industry, and design of associated human settlements mean that each conversation has to be different.

In these landscapes the open habitats are often the most biodiverse and are present where the topography of these landscapes has restricted development options. However local extensive grazing options are possible as 'light touch' management of the open spaces whilst providing potential income/employment locally.

Ecology is often perceived as being linked to visual 'naturalness'. But the industrial and social legacy has created a rich ecological mosaic of habitats and we are only just starting to understand their importance. They are particularly important for invertebrates with a recent report indicating that 22% of the species identified on local coal spoil sites were of conservation concern[44].

The primary considerations are scale, location and cumulative impact. It may be that to protect the wider landscape and ecology some items on the list may be 'either/ or'. In the Skyline discussions it was apparent that we often think in silos when considering land-use. In the Valleys, an integrated approach is needed. Not dividing land into forestry, open grassland, food production, but looking at the landscape as a whole with trees within the open grassland. From an ecological perspective natural regeneration could be encouraged over planting where soils are not agriculturally improved, and open spaces introduced within the woodland network.

Increasing access and accessibility to the landscape is a request from all three communities. Designing access for different activities in target locations whilst leaving other areas undisturbed will enable wildlife sensitive to human disturbance, such as reptiles and ground nesting birds, to persist.

7.A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

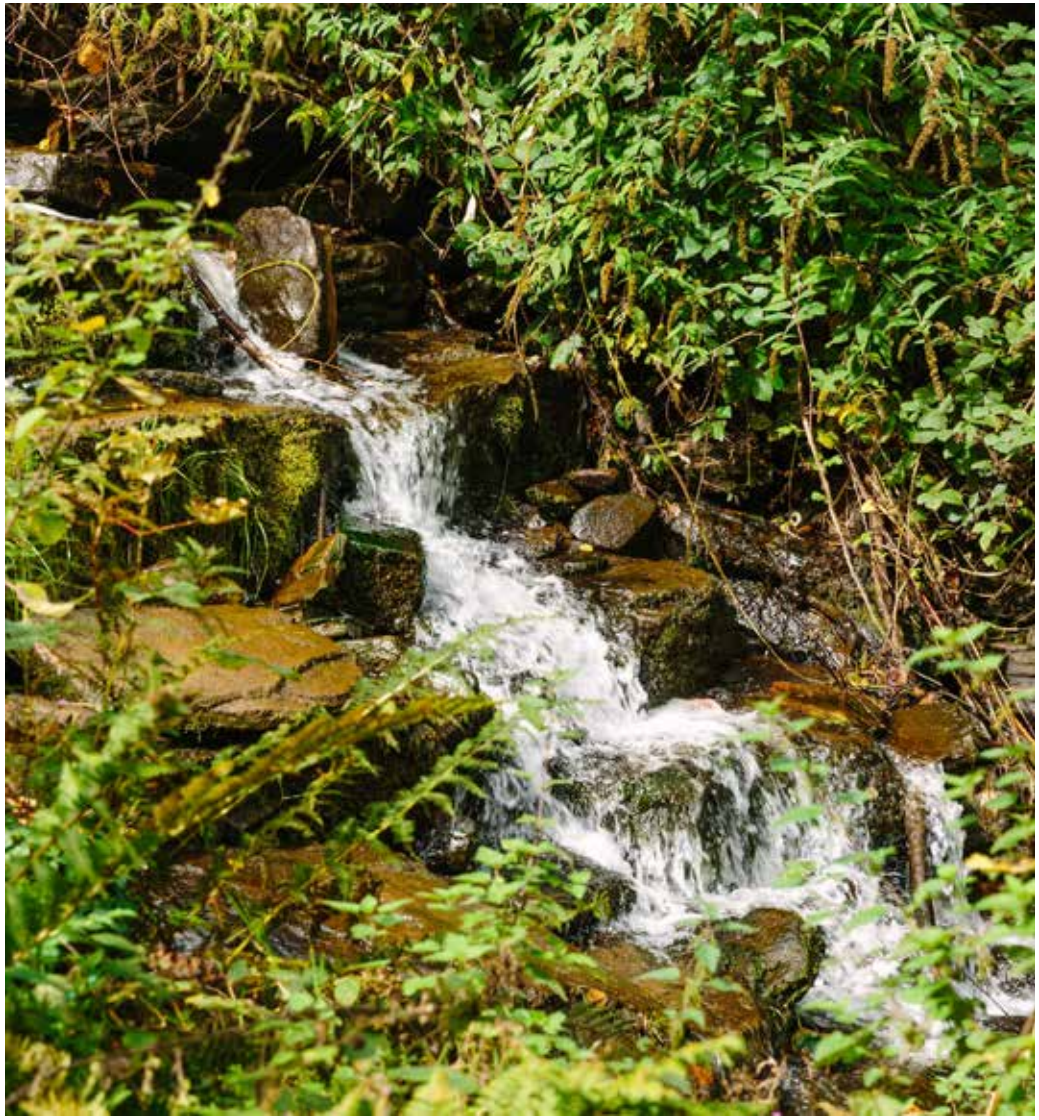
TREHERBERT – ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The proposed site is located at the top of the Rhondda Fawr and incorporates a number of cwms, steep valley sides and upland plateau. It is within an area characterised by its historic mining activity and the landscape reflects this in the diversity of habitat present. The area surrounds the settlements of Treorchy and Treherbert.

DESIGNATED SITES

Two statutory identified sites are within the proposed area.

Site Name	Designation	Reason for Designation
Mynydd Ty-isaf, Rhondda	SSSI	Cliffs and crags of glacial corries with a range of vegetation communities including heathland, species-poor grasslands, and fern-rich screes and rocky outcrops. The site supports a number of arctic-alpine species of local distribution in Wales.
Blaenrhondda Road Cutting	SSSI	This is the best available section of the flood-plain facies of the Carboniferous Rhondda Beds and is of great importance for understanding the late Westphalian history of the South Wales Coalfield.



7.A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) were identified as follows.

Site Name	SINC	Description	Reason for Designation
Mynydd Blaenrhondda and Mynydd Ty-Isaf	SINC 54	An extensive upland and valley side SINC, which occupies the western uplands above Blaenrhondda and Blaencwm.	**Primary Features:** Woodlands, Neutral grasslands, Acid grasslands, Marshy grasslands, Ffridd communities, Heathland and grass-heath Communities, Bog habitats and flushes, Watercourses, Mineral spoil tips and other post-industrial land, Mosaic habitats and common Land, Vascular plants **Contributory Features:** Birds, Reptiles, Invertebrates
Treherbert Slopes	SINC 58	An extensive area of ffridd on the lower eastern valley side above Treherbert and Fernhill Colliery.	**Primary Features:** Woodlands, Acid grasslands, Marshy grasslands, Ffridd communities, Heathland and grass-heath communities, Rock exposures **Contributory Features:** Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians, Invertebrates
Mynydd Ystradffernol	SINC 26	A huge upland plantation which lies on the deep peat of Mynydd Ystradffernol. The great majority of the SINC is Forestry Commission managed upland Sitka Spruce plantation which is almost exclusively planted into peat, which includes large areas of deep peat (blanket bog).	**Primary Features:** Woodlands, Marshy grasslands, Ffridd communities, Heathland and grass-heath communities, Watercourses, Birds **Contributory Features:** Mammals, Amphibians, Vascular plants
Cwmparc	SINC 178	An extensive area of wetland habitat in the bowl of Graig-fawr and Graig Fach (SSSI).	**Primary Features:** Neutral grasslands, Acid grasslands, Marshy grasslands, Ffridd communities, Bog Habitats and flushes, Watercourses, Mineral spoil tips and other post-industrial land **Contributory Features:** Woodlands, Mammals, Amphibians, Invertebrates
Mynydd Tyle-coch	SINC 179	The steep heavily forested slopes on the western valleyside of the Rhondda Fawr above Treorchy.	**Primary Features:** Woodlands, Acid grasslands, Marshy grasslands, Ffridd communities **Contributory Features:** Birds
Taff and Rhondda Rivers	SINC 142	The River Taff is the main river of the County Borough and a major biodiversity artery. The river and its bank side habitats are extremely diverse and varied.	**Primary Features:** Woodlands, Scrub communities, Neutral grasslands, Marshy grasslands, Floodplain grazing marsh, Fens, Reedbeds and other swamps, Watercourses, Standing open water, Mammals, Fish **Contributory Features:** Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians, Invertebrates, Vascular plants

CAERAU – ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The proposed site is located at the top of the Llynfi and incorporates steep valley sides, conifer plantations, coal spoil and upland plateau. It is within an area characterised by its historic mining activity and the landscape reflects this in the diversity of habitat present. The area surrounds the settlement of Caerau.

There are no statutory identified sites within the proposed area. The nearest is Cwm Du Woodlands SSSI which is approximately 2km to the south.

There are three non-statutory sites – Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) – identified within the proposed wider area. However, they are not in the final area defined in this report but there are similarities in habitat and an indication of the potential for the area proposed for management.

Site Name	Designation	Reason for Designation: Qualifying features
Caerau West	SINC MG-1-M	Dry acid grassland **Secondary features** Purple moor grass and rush pasture
Caerau North	SINC MG-2-M	Purple moor grass and rush pasture Dry acid grassland Lowland raised bog **Secondary features** Coniferous plantation
Tudor West	SINC MG-18-M	Purple moor grass and rush pasture Raised bog **Secondary features** Native woodland Bracken

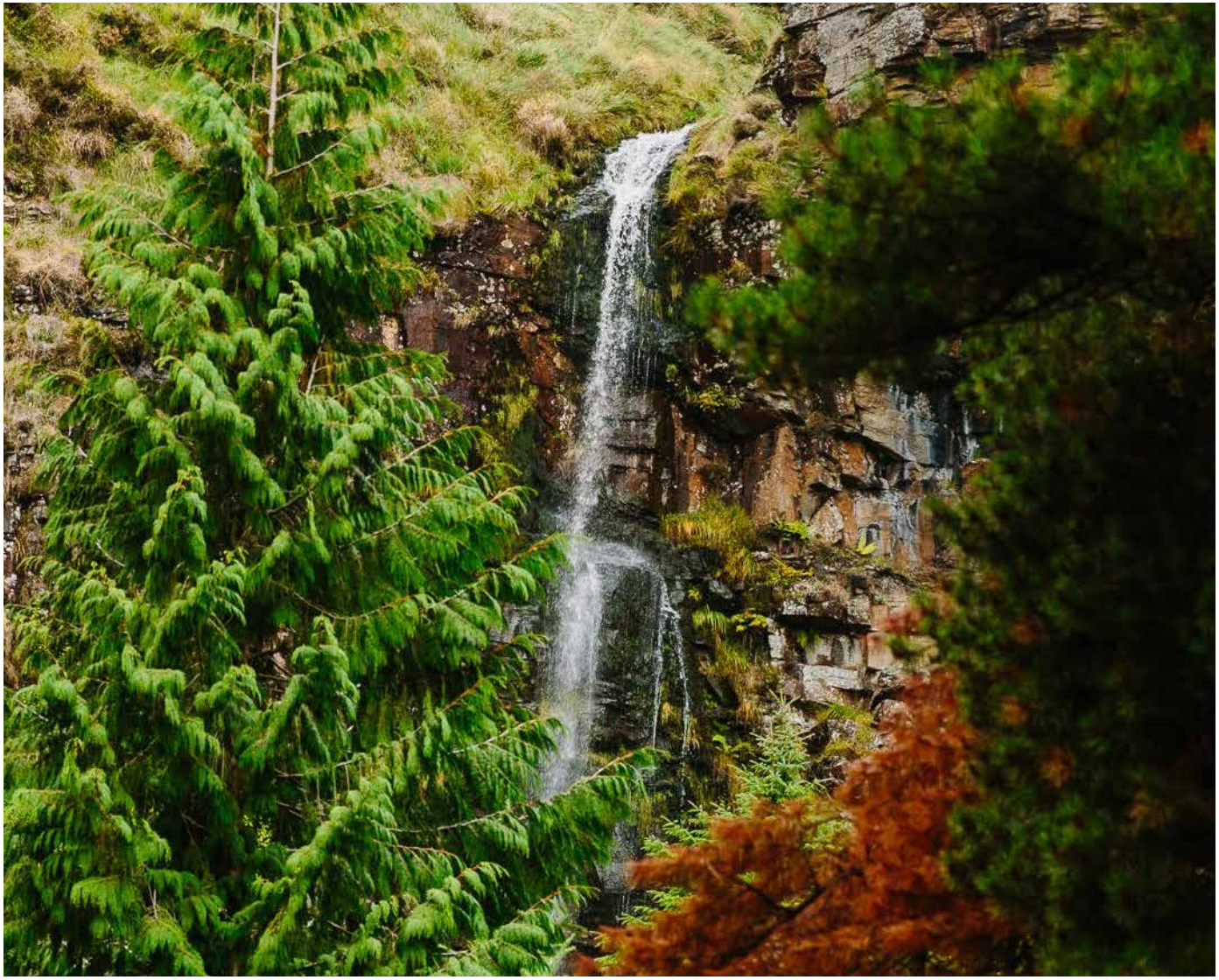
7. A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE

YNYSOWEN – ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The proposed site is situated around the settlement of Aberfan and incorporates both sides of the valley through which the River Taff flows. The area is comprised of steep valley sides, dense forestry and upland plateau. It is within an area characterised by its historic mining activity and the landscape reflects this in the diversity of habitat present. There are no statutory identified sites within the proposed area however 11 non-statutory sites – Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) were identified within the wider proposed area, though some of these have only a small section within the boundary.

Site Name	SINC	Description	Reason for Designation
West of Aberfan	SINC 34	Two parcels of land situated on the lower slopes of the Taff valley between Aberfan and the A470. The southern areas of the site support a mosaic of damp neutral grasslands, semi-natural broadleaved woodlands along minor streams and bracken stands. The woodlands include areas of wet woodland and drier areas. The neutral grasslands are generally species-rich and include both unimproved and semi-improved areas. The northern portion of the site consists of a colliery spoil substrate that has revegetated with a mosaic of neutral grasslands and mixed-species scrub.	Wet woodland, Neutral grassland, Ffridd/ bracken slopes, Rivers, streams and floodplains, Mineral spoil areas
St. Tydfil Forest (East)	SINC 63	Large area of habitat mosaics, which includes significant coverage of woodland, all of which support ancient woodland indicator species as well as heathland and acid grassland throughout. Bird species present include the marsh tit and barn owl.	Wet woodland, Lowland beech woodland, Acid grassland, Neutral grassland, Heathland, Ffridd/bracken slopes, Rivers, streams and floodplains, Rocks, cliffs & quarries
Mynydd Merthyr	SINC 28	Large area of semi-upland ffridd and upland moorland habitat mostly developed on old colliery spoil. Chiefly dry acid grasslands on the upper slopes with several areas of inundation vegetation on tip plateaux and areas of bracken and marshy grassland. A small area of bilberry heath is also present.	Wet woodland (small area), Acid grassland, Neutral grassland, Heathland (small area), Purple moor-grass & rush pastures, Ffridd/bracken slopes, Rivers, streams and floodplains, Mineral spoil areas, Dry stone walls and other boundary features
Tarren-y-Gigfran	SINC 44	Semi-upland valley side slopes above the A470, including a large disused quarry with screes and outcrops, supporting dry heathland, bracken slopes and semi-improved acid grassland. Also includes numerous areas of semi-natural woodland, including ancient semi-natural woodland and wet woodland along the course of small streams. A second, smaller parcel of land to the west of the main part of the site comprises a hilltop heathland. The site is partially enclosed by conifer plantation.	Woodland, Acid grassland, Ffridd communities, Heathlands and grass-heath communities, Watercourses, Mosaic habitats and common land, Rock exposures, Other features

7.A BETTER HOME FOR NATURE



CONCLUSIONS

- It is a mistake to see these post-industrial landscapes as abandoned or of no ecological importance.
- In depth ecological assessments would be needed as the community starts to plan future landscape use so that we ensure an increase the ecological resilience of the landscape.
- We need to see the landscape as a whole rather than as a mosaic of land for a specific purpose. An integrated approach should be taken which has trees within an open grassland landscape.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM?

HOW DID THE COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR THEIR VALLEY TRANSLATE INTO A SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE PLAN?

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

By working with the communities – re-membering and re-visioning (Section 5 – ***Developing the Vision***) – we had started to identify the long-term vision for the valley. Our next task was to distil a long-list of potential activities into a short-list that would form the heart of the 10-year plan for each valley. Through discussion and with input from the ecologists, and insight on successful business models from established community projects, we started to compile the short-list. Not everything on the short-list is certain to be realised in the first decade. But it is a starting point for additional research and planning.

We noticed that the activities could be divided into two broad categories. Firstly, those activities that are income generating – where there is a sustainable business model such as forestry, renewable energy generation, or food growing. And, secondly, those activities which met social needs within the community but did not have profitable business models. For example, community orchard, disabled forest access, a green burial site, or a wild swimming area – activities where there isn't an income stream or where the business model is unproven.

The income generated from the commercial activities could be used to fund the other activities that didn't have sustainable business models. For our communities this was a very important part of the appeal of community stewardship – earning money to deliver social and environmental benefits.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

There have been many community-led developments on public land – coppicing agreements, community access and community renewable energy without landscape-scale land tenure agreements. But without long-term rights from freehold or leasehold tenure means that seeking permission and obtaining grant funding on a case by case basis can make the progress dishearteningly slow. Similarly, although funding from grants is available (a wind farm's community funds, Big Lottery, and many others) the final decision on which projects receive funding rests with the members of the grantor's funding panel and not the community.

By giving control to the community Skyline has the potential to overcome both of these challenges. Landscape-scale land stewardship means, subject to the usual planning controls and felling licences etc., that the community has both the right and the funds to deliver the projects they want to take forward. This transfer of control to the community from the current land managers and the funding committees of grantors was perceived to be one of the key benefits of land stewardship. Giving communities control, for the first time, over the landscape that surrounds the town.

What follows is a summary of the proposed activities that emerged from the process for each community. There isn't room to go into all of the detailed work that supported these plans, but they give some idea of the range and scope of the imagined future.

Those activities that are potentially income generating are in red. Those that are expected to be cash consuming are in green. Of course, some of the activities in green may well become income earning in the future.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

TREHERBERT

Hydro-electric: Three sites have been surveyed – one with a capacity of 100kW, two at 30kW.

Photovoltaic: One 500kW ground-mounted array on the Fernhill colliery site.

Biomass CHP: 50kW combined heat and power generator using biomass from the local forestry operations. Three possible locations have been identified and could provide electricity and hot water to the polytunnel growing enterprise; the old peoples' home; and the community centre.

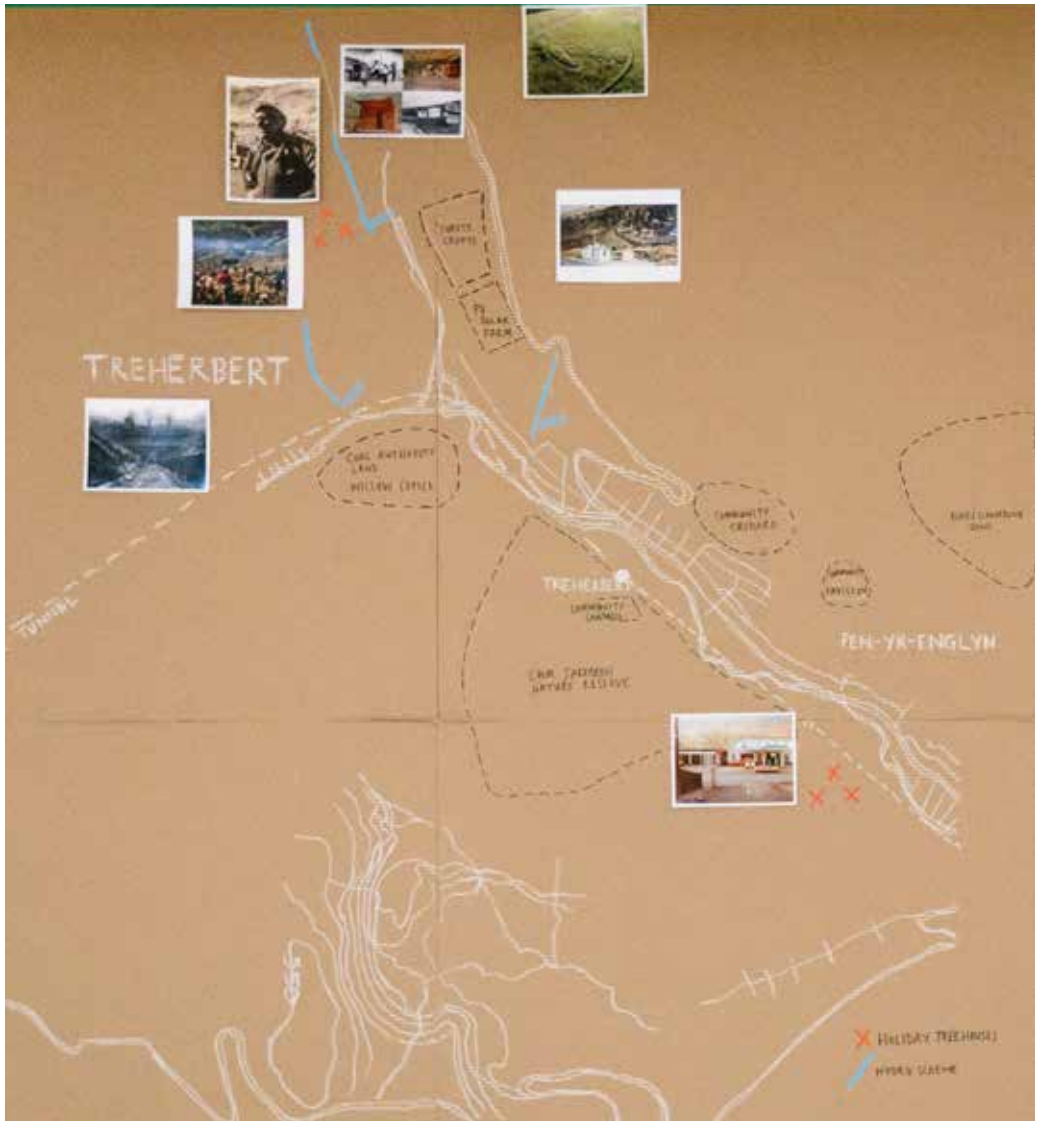
Wind turbine: Unconfirmed potential to construct one 1MW wind turbine adjacent to the commercial Pen y Cymoedd wind farm.

Commercial vegetable growing: Using hot water and electricity from a Biomass CHP plant, a vegetable growing business would be piloted with a view to producing all-year-round vegetables for local consumers.

Commercial forestry: An area of at least 200 Ha has been identified for commercial forestry. It would be managed on a sustainable basis using continuous cover approaches.

Timber processing: Although much of the timber from the commercial forestry operations will be professionally harvested and sold to the market, some will be retained and processed at the community sawmill. This will produce biomass for the CHP generators and local demand as well as dimensional sawn timber for the glamping pods, social housing, other construction projects.

Treehouse glamping pods: Up to 10 treehouse / glamping pods for holiday accommodation will be constructed in the valley.



8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

Cwm Saerbren nature reserve: An ambitious plan to create a 200 Ha natural woodland in the Cwm Saerbren basin over the next 20 years by removing conifers and allowing natural regeneration. Next to the train station, this will become a major visitor attraction for the valley.

Community orchard: Community planting of fruit and nut trees for community use.

Coppice planting: Planting of willow and other trees for future coppicing for biomass production. Can be used to stabilise the eroding mining waste.

Community polytunnels: Indoor allotment space for all-year-round growing.

Access path improvements: Investment in disabled access to the forest tracks.

Scrambler bike area: A dedicated scrambler bike sports area as a local amenity and to deter illegal activity.

Forest croft plots: 3 or 4 forest croft plots of up to 3 Ha each with permission to self-build and horticulture small-holding.

Forest performance space: An open-air performance space with infrastructure created from the sawmill.

Green gym: An area dedicated for outdoor fitness.

Woodworking skills shed: Timber woodworking space for skills training.

Cabin in the woods: A timber-built community cabin

ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Many of these plans would involve land-use change and therefore require an ecological appraisal of the land.

Utilising an existing forestry block (as oppose to planting up open habitat) has the potential to improve biodiversity. There is potential to enhance habitats by increasing diversity within the forest area using mixed native tree species and a mix of forestry operations, e.g. small clear fell coupes and continuous cover options. Areas of open habitat within the forest block should be maintained and enhanced, e.g. not re-planting areas with peaty soils, and identifying potential steppingstones or corridors through the coupes. Considerations for change in management include the honey buzzard, which occurs in scattered locations in the South Wales Valleys, and nightjar which currently utilise areas of recently felled conifer.

Hydro-electric schemes would need a full ecological assessment through the planning process. Due to the nature of the industrial history in the South Wales Valley there are few watercourses that have not been modified in character. However, many have retained or recovered high biodiversity value. Impacts of hydro-electric schemes are dependent on location and early discussion with the Local Authority and NRW is advised.

For the other options they would all impact on existing habitat and therefore an ecological survey is required. Areas with existing open habitat, e.g. semi-natural grasslands, heathland, woodlands or open mosaic should be avoided. A key discussion is the scale of each option, appropriate location and cumulative impacts across the landscape.

As part of the list of potential ideas there is not currently an option for managing existing open habitat. This needs to be considered alongside the options below to ensure that an overall ecological benefit is realised.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

CAERAU

Commercial forestry: An area of at least 200 Ha has been identified for commercial forestry. It would be managed on a sustainable basis using continuous cover approaches, hopefully to work in conjunction with an existing local sawmill to meet local timber demand.

Hydro-electric scheme: One site has been identified for a 38kW scheme – close to development so could be used for domestic use or for food growing initiatives.

PV panels: One 500kW ground mounted array. Capital cost around £500k, income upwards of £25k a year.

Christmas tree farm: With the aim to meet the Christmas tree demand from the community.

Pumpkin field: One small field dedicated for a pumpkin patch that would be the focus for an autumn pumpkin and food festival.

Community growing area: Extending the current allotments and growing area including indoor growing space.

Green burial area: Creating a dedicated woodland area for burial and remembrance.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

Disabled forest access: Improving access for all to the woodland.

Forest fruit growing area: Potential for an extensive community orchard and forest growing area.

"Super" men's shed: Developing the existing men's shed to create a building (from harvested timber) for social activity, and skills development.

Children's play area: Strong interest in recreating a children's outdoor play area and a natural swimming spot – regaining something that had been lost.

ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Many of the potential operations would involve land-use change and therefore require an ecological appraisal of the land available.

Utilising the existing forestry block (as oppose to planting up open habitat) has the potential to be positive for biodiversity. Alongside existing coniferous blocks there is potential to enhance habitats by increasing diversity within the forest area using mixed native tree species and a mix of forestry operations, e.g. small clear fell coupes and continuous cover options. Areas of open habitat within the forest block should be maintained and enhanced, e.g. not re-planting areas with peaty soils and associated habitat, and identifying potential steppingstones or corridors through the coupes. Considerations for change in existing management include the honey buzzard, which occurs in scattered locations in the South Wales Valleys, and nightjar which currently utilise areas of recently felled conifer.

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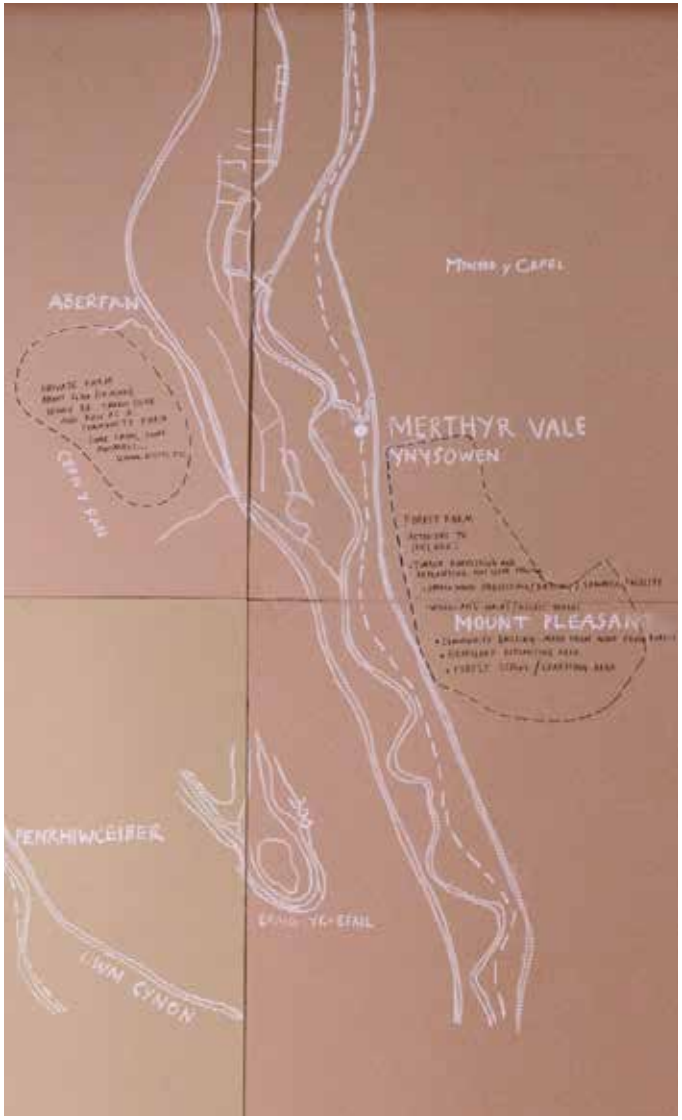
8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM



YNYSOWEN

Ynysowen is in fact three different communities, Aberfan, Mount Pleasant, and Merthyr Vale, separated from each other and the landscape by the river, the railway, and a major trunk road (A470).

The final plan focused on two separate community farms. A more traditional farm on the western side of the valley based on an existing private farm. It would be an education centre, have animals, and grow food. On the eastern side of the valley the plan was for a forest farm that would combine commercial forestry with a sawmill,

wild camping, forest food growing, a forest school campus, natural woodland with access routes, community buildings.

ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

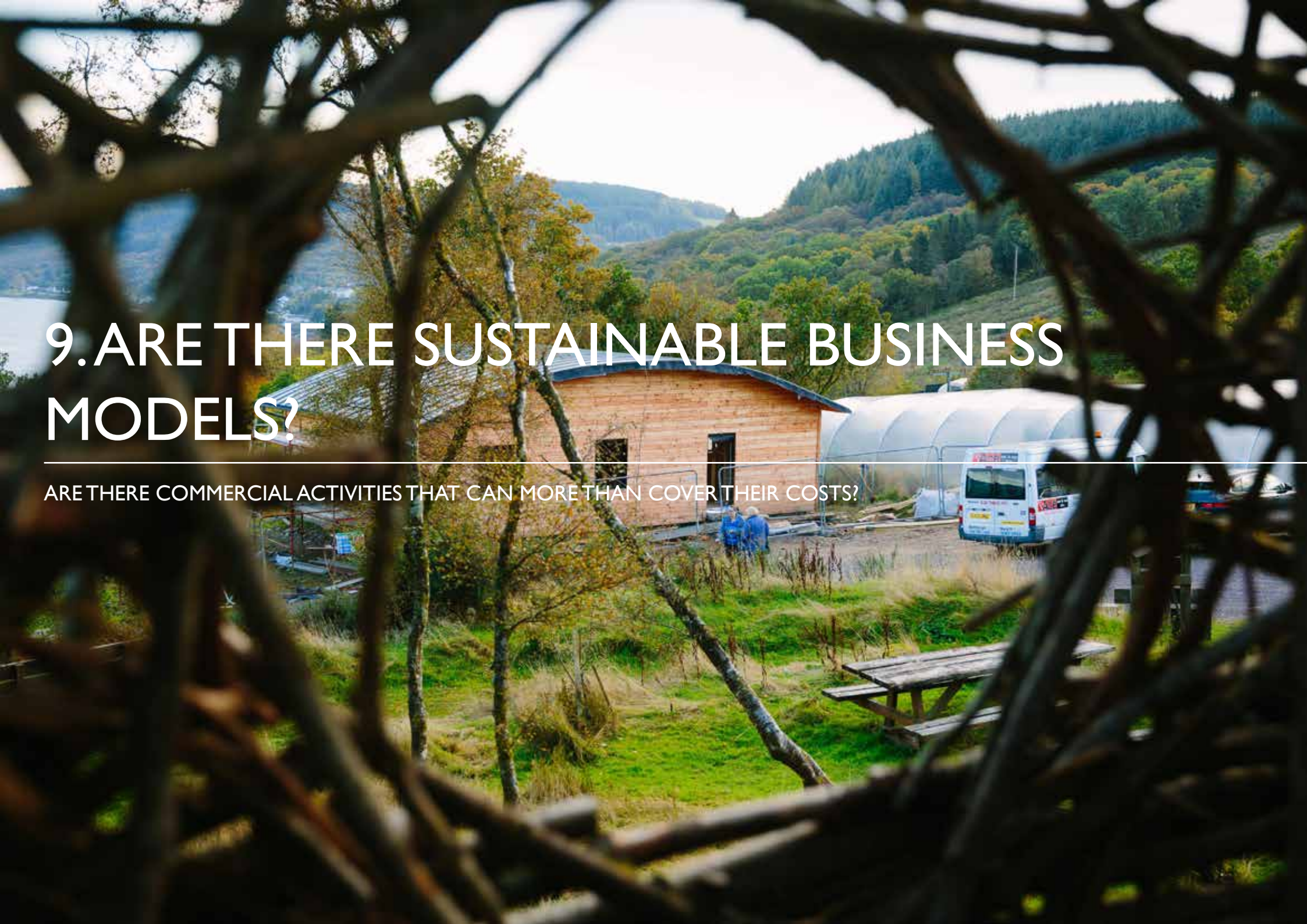
The exact location of the farm education centre on the western side of the valley is unknown. However, there are tracts of habitat within the farmland, some of which are identified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Ecological surveys prior to defining plans will enable identification of appropriate options and locations.

Within the commercial forestry, operations should consider avoiding developing on existing open areas of high ecological interest. New clearings within the coniferous forestry could support the activities mentioned. Again, scale, location and cumulative impacts need to be considered at an appropriate scale. Utilising the existing forestry block (as oppose to planting up open habitat) has the potential to be positive for biodiversity. Alongside existing coniferous blocks there is potential to enhance habitats by increasing diversity within the forest area using mixed native tree species and a mix of forestry operations, e.g. small clear fell coupes and continuous cover options. Areas of open habitat within the forest block should be maintained and enhanced e.g. not re-planting areas with peaty soils and associated habitat, and identifying potential stepping stones or corridors through the coupes. Considerations for change in existing management of the forest structure include the honey buzzard, which occurs in scattered locations in the South Wales Valleys, and nightjar which currently utilise areas of recently felled conifer.

8. WHAT WAS THE DREAM

CONCLUSIONS

- Some of the visions were strikingly bold – the Cwm Saerbren woodland nature reserve, Caerau's natural burial ground, the Ynysowen Forest Farm.
- Through the process the communities slowly began to believe. Encouraged by what had been witnessed on the trip to Scotland, and with growing understanding of what stewardship could entail, there was a growing sense of confidence.
- The plans covered the full spectrum of Well-being goals. There was very little or no conflict between, for example, the desire to see economic activity and environmental protection. For example, there were plans for continued commercial forestry, but the community wanted to see this delivered through continuous cover techniques.



9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

ARE THERE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES THAT CAN MORE THAN COVER THEIR COSTS?

9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

The Skyline approach is built on the assumption that there are some income generating activities that are sustainable for the long-term. That these activities can generate net income can contribute towards the running costs of the organisation and towards developments which do not generate income. However, it is clear from Scotland that further specific grant applications will continue to be part of the income mix to deliver specific benefits.

Here we outline a few of the income earning activities that have promise in the context of the South Wales Valleys. There will be other opportunities, including some that we can't even imagine, but for this analysis we will focus on three activities which have the clear potential to generate a year-on-year cash surplus: renewable energy generation; forestry; and food production. Other activities such as food retailing (cafes) and eco-tourism (glamping pods / treehouses), and green burial sites, can generate income but, for now, the assumption is that these can provide employment and create social benefit but are unlikely to more than cover operating costs.

RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

The South Wales Valleys is blessed with excellent wind, hydroelectric, biomass and solar resources for renewable energy generation. The Pen y Cymoedd wind farm that surrounds Treherbert is the largest onshore wind farm in England and Wales. At a much smaller scale, Cwm Saerbren boasts a 30kW community owned hydroelectric scheme that was commissioned in 2018.

The financial performance of small- and medium-scale renewable schemes is very dependent on the UK Government's financial incentives. The closure of the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) for new projects from April 2019 has significantly slowed the deployment of new schemes. However, this is being countered by the continuing fall in cost of photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage. Another positive development is the increasing use of 'behind the meter' solutions that allow locally generated electricity to be directly matched to a local demand. This can be done either through private wires or through mechanisms such as Energy Local's smart meter solutions. The economic returns for new renewable energy investments will fluctuate over the coming decades in ways that we can't predict. The following assessments show that even without FIT there is a financial return from medium-scale renewable energy generation. This return will be enhanced by not needing to pay rent on community managed land, the low cost of capital for community projects (currently capital at 4% interest is available), and grant support for the high-risk feasibility and permission phase of projects.

The following figures are only indicative. They are based on current industry costs and assume that 50% of the generated electricity is used locally – domestic or commercial consumers through an Energy Local Club or similar mechanism for matching.

		Capital cost	Annual income
100kW hydroelectric	Treherbert	£484,000	£37,500
40kW hydroelectric	Caerau	£240,000	£12,000
30kW hydroelectric	Treherbert	£209,000	£10,400
500kW PV	Caerau, Treherbert	£300,000	£35,000

9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

In Treherbert there is a proposal for one or more 50kW Biomass CHP (combined heat and power) plants. The economic assessment of these plants requires a detailed feasibility plan which would need to be matched to the proposed heat and electric load. This has not been undertaken for this study but the proposal is to use the abundant local biomass resource as feedstock for the generator and to use the heat and electricity for greenhouse growing project or heating community buildings.

Renewable energy generating assets can last for many decades. Bearings, gearboxes, and electrical systems and, eventually, PV panels will need replacing. However, a large part of the infrastructure investment will still be useable many decades into the future including the wind turbine platform, the hydroelectric weir, penstock, turbine house, and the grid connection. Investing for the long-term in renewable energy will provide energy with near-zero marginal cost of production for decades to come.

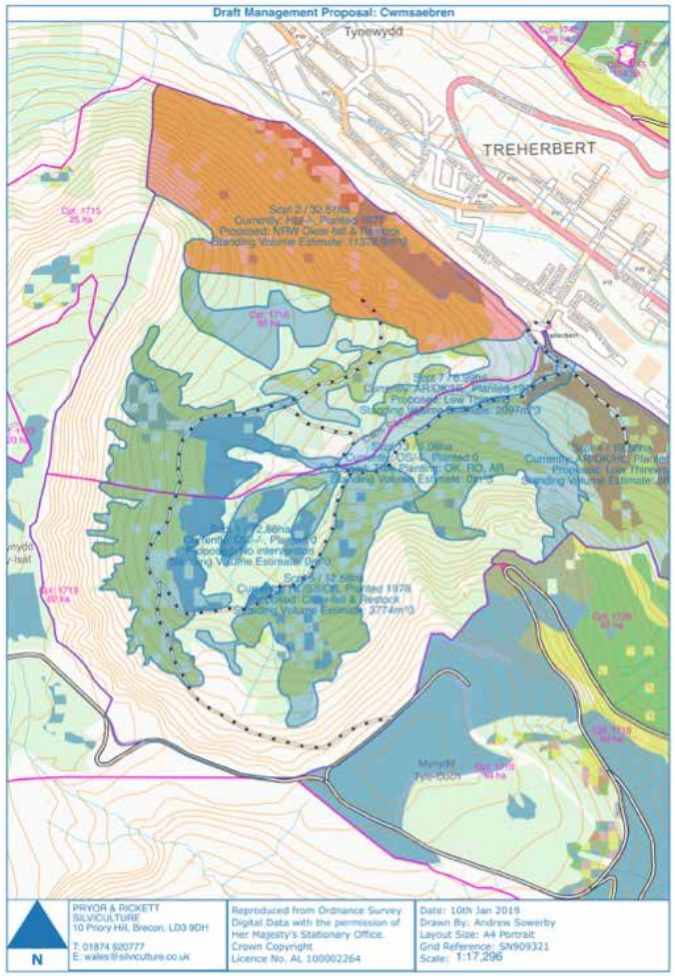
FORESTRY

Forestry is the main asset and source of income for many community land projects. All three of the Skyline communities have identified forestry as a key component of their outline business plans. It was not possible in this report to publish the detailed forest plans. However, in Treherbert we were able to benefit from the advice of a professional forester to scope the potential for two projects.

Cwm Saerbren Natural woodland

The community have worked with a professional forestry consultant to develop a management plan to regenerate the Cwm Saerbren basin (in total about 200 Ha) into a natural woodland and grassland area. Approximately 86 Ha will be felled and restocked with native species, 73 Ha is semi-natural grassland and will be retained, and 30 Ha will be thinned to improve existing trees and diversify the woodland. Some of the standing timber will be felled by external contractors, others managed by a locally recruited and trained workforce. This plan is self-financing meaning that revenue from timber sales is matched by operational costs including training and wages for the local workforce, replanting, forestry road improvements, purchase and development of the old brewery site (in the process of being acquired by the community), and the development of the processing plant and sawmill.

Over the 10 years the felled timber income would be around £1.1m. At least one fifth of this would be felled by a locally recruited and trained workforce. This income figure does not include any allowance for added value processing in the community owned sawmill which should create further employment and skills training. Over the decade there will not be a significant surplus but the income will have covered, in addition to contractor felling costs, £30,000 for access road improvement, £60,000 for development of storage and timber processing facilities, a training (full-time and volunteers) and recruitment budget



9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

of £40,000, and £240,000 wages for local labour, plus the costs of restocking (materials and labour).

The analysis has demonstrated that over the period of one decade, and with no further funding, the community is able to create a 200 Ha area of natural woodland and grassland with excellent accessibility (entrance next to the train station) and create 4 long-term and skilled jobs.

Commercial forestry operations

The community will need to secure a long-term sustainable income from forestry operations. Consequently, not all of the woodland can be converted to amenity woodland like Cwm Saerbren and some sustainable commercial forestry plans will need to be developed. We did not undertake an analysis based on individual forest blocks but we did get professional assessment of the potential based on the local forest (species, age, access) and the current market conditions. The conclusions were, based on a total of 200 Ha managed on a sustainable basis, with a 50-year cropping cycle there could be an annual net income of £42–56,000. The community was clear that they would prefer to harvest using a continuous cover model. Our modelling assumes that, whilst the majority of the felling will be done under contract by specialists, a proportion of the felling work would be done by locally recruited and trained staff (2 FTE assumed – plus the additional jobs in the timber processing centre).

With over two decades of community forest management in Scotland there is a lot of evidence to support these proposals.

Knoydart Forest Trust looks after the woodland on the Knoydart peninsular on behalf of the Knoydart Foundation. It aims to manage the woodland to increase the benefits to the environment, local community and wider public. It employs three local people and provides employment for a number of local subcontractors. Since 1999 it has planted over 350,000 trees. In 2017-2018 it had a turnover of around £100,000 from forestry – the majority through its trading subsidiary Wood Knoydart CIC. It aims to be financially self-sustaining through the harvest and processing of timber and production of wood products. The Trust have also built and maintain paths and tracks, 2 mountain bike tracks, shelters, benches, sculptures and, in partnership with the Foundation's Ranger Service, provide guided walks.

9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

FOOD PRODUCTION

All of the Skyline communities identified food production as part of their vision. In general, the soil in these valleys is not suitable for market gardening and there is an extensive area of coal mining spoil that will not support food for human consumption. What the three communities do have is flat land (typically on the old colliery sites) and access to cheap electricity and heat (see under renewable energy above). The plan is to pilot the production of all-year-round salad and vegetables under glass or plastic. Although a lot of investment (private or grant funding) will be needed there are precedents which illustrate what can be achieved.

Organiclea started on 2001. They are based in Waltham Forest NE London and operate from an old local authority plant nursery site. It is a 5 Ha site with 3 big glass houses. They grow a range of fruit and vegetables and have a vineyard. It is operated as a workers' cooperative with a staff of 16 (most part-time and sessional workers). They turnover about £300,000 per year by selling fruit and vegetables through a box scheme but supplement the offering by purchasing from other producers. They also have a market stall and supply the restaurant trade. They also receive £150,000 in grant income to provide training in food growing to provide basic skills training for those who have been out of work. Organiclea is able to make an annual surplus of £15–20,000.

The Organiclea vision is "of a socially and environmentally just food system where the means of production and distribution, including access to land, seed and water are controlled not by markets or corporations but by the people themselves".

Together, the communities in Scotland own or manage over 250,000 hectares – an area larger than the entire public forest estate in Wales. Some of these projects have been under community management since the late 1990s and there is a wealth of experience from over two decades of community stewardship.

As part of Skyline, in October 2018, we took representatives from the three communities to visit projects in Scotland. We visited Kilfinan Community Woodland in Argyll, and North West Mull Community Forest. A few of us combined these visits with attending the Community Woodland Association (Scotland) conference in Inverness – a chance to hear firsthand about other established projects. The Kilfinan Community Woodland project was established in 2010 and gives and clear picture of what can be achieved in less than a decade.

9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

KILFINAN COMMUNITY FOREST

Asset: Acharachan Forest, 1067 acres purchased from the Forestry Commission in 2010 and 2015
Website: http://www.kilfinancommunityforest.com/

Current projects and activities:

- Sawmill operation providing rough sawn and planed timber to the local community and beyond.
- Community allotments managed by Kyles Allotment Group.
- Timber harvesting operation delivering vital investment income.
- Community activities, events and volunteering.
- Workshop rental to local woodworkers.
- Development of a forest playground.
- Three woodland crofts now registered and in development.
- New 'hot tunnel' to be built to grow out-of-season produce utilising sawmill waste as an innovative heating system.
- Aspirations of woodland burials, event space and camping area.
- Affordable housing plots.
- Summer forest school.
- Multi-purpose facility funded by HIE and the Climate Challenge Fund, intended to be used as a space for training, community events and a forest nursery.
- Youth forest skills development programme.
- Path improvement and promotion of walking routes.
- Forest hydro-electric scheme – generates revenue.
- Local woodfuel sales and delivery service.
- Community composting facility.

Main successes so far

- Now a sustainable community enterprise which employs staff and supports a wide range of community activities.
- Established a successful volunteering programme which involves diverse groups of people from all corners of the community; includes workshops and training events which enhance people's skills and encourage new hobbies.
- Has now registered three woodland crofts, with crofting families living locally and starting to develop their crofts.
- Now a producer of renewable energy, having installed a 70kW micro-hydro scheme using in-house expertise to keep installation costs down.
- Has supported five annual youth skills development programmes, giving young people useful skills for their personal development.
- Award winning enterprise, having won Scotland's Finest Woods Awards twice, been shortlisted for Social Enterprise of the Year, and won various other accolades, including an award for supporting volunteers.

Challenges

- Cash flow is often tight and good financial discipline is required to manage the finances effectively and ensure that several months of cash reserves for salaries can be maintained.
- Lack of succession planning to replace key staff / Board members.
- West coast weather when trying to complete
- building projects!
- Getting the community onside.
- Difficulty in assigning operational duties to non-revenue generating activity, e.g. amenity improvements.
- Small team of staff managing multi-faceted business; limited time/resources to complete projects and develop new initiatives.

9. ARE THERE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS?

CONCLUSIONS

- There is clear evidence of sustainable business models from forestry, renewable energy generation, and food production when communities have long-term economic rights, to land at scale.
- In addition to the forestry operations, Kilfinan Community Forest has been able to deliver a number of projects for social benefit.
- The primary production from timber, energy generation and food production can directly create direct jobs, provide entrepreneurial opportunities for new businesses and boost the local economy.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT ARISE WITH COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP AND HOW DO YOU ENSURE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF THE LANDSCAPE?

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

When we started to consider community stewardship a number of issues arose concerning the legal and governance structures. Some of the issues explored here arose directly as part of the Skyline feasibility study (e.g. restrictions to title of the land under consideration). Other issues, such as the legal form and governance mechanisms of the legal entity to manage the landscape, would only be encountered in the delivery of a land stewardship project. As well as capturing the discussions through the Skyline feasibility work, we also report on how two decades of experience from Scotland and other UK projects informs the options for land stewardship in Wales.

Discussions about governance can quickly become technical questions about legal forms and constitutions. But it is worth remembering that the legal forms are there to deliver the underlying values and goals of the community. You have to start with a clear understanding of which is the community that is being heard, what are the values they share, what are the goals that they want to achieve? Only with this knowledge can you be sure that the technical structures are fit for purpose.

LEGAL MODELS OF TENURE

We established in Section 6, ***Understanding Land Rights***, that the community will require a 'bundle of rights' to be effective stewards of the landscape. The community's interest in the land can take various legal forms. Here we set out the options and assess the advantages and disadvantages of each. The legal options for the transfer of land rights are: freehold; leasehold (long- or short-term); management agreement; a licence; or a farm business tenancy.

With freehold tenure, the owner is able, within the law, to do what they want with the property, only subject to the covenants and restrictions that may be found in the land title deeds. With a leasehold property, a person has the right to use a property for a set period of time that is agreed upon in exchange for rent. Once this period of time is over, the property returns to the freehold owner. Freehold tenure does give the freedom to exercise the

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

key rights required by the community: access, exclusion, management, and withdrawal and gives exclusive, indefinite possession. As a capital asset on the balance sheet of a community organisation, freehold land provides the ability to raise capital. But it comes with full responsibility for the all historic and environmental issues.

With leasehold you have exclusive possession for a fixed period of time. Part II of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 may give you the right to extend your lease at the end of the term if you request a renewal on the same terms. Covenants can be provided in the lease controlling the use of the land. It is common for leases to contain rent review provisions meaning rents may be heightened during the lease term – although the expectation here is that there will be nominal (peppercorn) rent. A lease will also mean that the landowner can retain some control as the community cannot normally alter the use without the landlord's permission. A leasehold property is less likely to be used as an asset for fundraising.

Additional options could include a management agreement – effectively a contract between the two parties. The management agreement does not transfer any fundamental land rights. Management agreements are typically used for short-term arrangements covering the delivery of specific services.

Alternatively, a farm business tenancy for a long term could be entered into with a management plan and One Planet Development principles.

During the Skyline feasibility study and throughout this report we refer to community 'stewardship' of land. By this we mean the right of the community to manage and benefit from the landscape with unrestricted access and, most importantly, the right to benefit economically from the land. This could be achieved, as is the case in many of the Scottish community land projects, through legal ownership of the land. But ownership is not necessary. A long lease or a management agreement between the landowner and the community can confer the rights required for the community to manage the landscape for to their own needs.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

GOVERNING THE VALLEY

We are now going to focus on the organisation that could be the holder of those rights and how that organisation is governed for the benefit of the whole community.

There is a lot of experience of community management of assets, both in Scotland through the community land movement and in Wales through a long history of community asset transfer (including the Brynmawr Experiment[45] of 1934).

BRYNMAWR EXPERIMENT

Few places suffered more in the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s than Brynmawr in South Wales. A few years earlier the closure of collieries had devastated the local economy, and soon poverty was severe by any standards. A Quaker couple, Peter and Lillian Scott, launched the Order of Friends, based on the principle that work should be controlled by the hands of those engaged in it, and began the Brynmawr Experiment. A community council was set up in Brynmawr to direct activities, and a community survey was undertaken. A building was taken over as a Community House and became the base for welfare and social activities including a citizen's advice bureau and over twenty different youth clubs. In 1931 Brynmawr and Clydach Valley Industries Limited was formed as an umbrella group to create and manage local enterprises and provide work. Capital for new companies was raised by issuing shares to the workers in the form of loans from the umbrella group. Surpluses produced by the companies would repay the loans and control of the company would end up in the hands of the shareholders, the workers themselves.

Two enterprises, Brynmawr Bootmakers Ltd and Brynmawr Furniture Makers Ltd began production at a converted brewery, Gwalia Works. The furniture was designed by the talented Paul Matt on minimalist Quaker and Arts and Craft principles and quickly established a nationwide reputation.

The company sold its message of high-quality product and social value. After the outbreak of the Second World War, however, sales declined. It became impossible to import materials, and the furniture enterprise was forced to close. The Brynmawr Bootmakers survived, winning army contracts during the war and becoming fully self-financing.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

Before we look at the possible legal forms for the community organisation (CO), we start by looking at the purpose and function of the organisation.

A legal entity (The Community Organisation, CO) that will:
- Provide limited liability to members and officers.
- Have a membership that is drawn widely across the community – the members electing the board.
- Be the legal owner of the asset or the 'bundle of rights' over the land.
- Contract with staff and other organisations to deliver the management plans.

A board of trustees or directors (a Governance Team, GT, of the CO) that will:
- Set the long-term strategy.
- Be answerable to the community membership.
- Provide scrutiny of the operational management of the asset.
- Ensure that the organisation meets all of its legal commitments, including health and safety considerations and compliance with any conditions or procedures relating to the management of the asset.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are kept aware of key issues.

A management team (MT, reporting to the GT) employed by the CO (or wholly owned subsidiary) that will:
- Create the operational plans and allocate resources (land, money, staff, and volunteers) to deliver the strategy.
- Oversee the day-to-day operations management of the land either directly or through partners.
- Provide regular reports to the GT and the wider community.

Another key role for the CO is to maximise the opportunities for local economic development – generating jobs and increasing the prosperity of the area as a whole. This can include developing critical infrastructure such as business centers, bunkhouses, paths and access routes, and creating crofts to enable local people to earn an income from farming and small-scale forest enterprise.

Finally, the CO may simply act as a landlord, leasing land and assets to other businesses at a market rate, such as workshop or office space, housing, or land for camp sites, smallholdings, allotments and other activities.

The development of these diverse models takes time. The mix of core charitable activity undertaken by the CO and that undertaken by others such as trading subsidiaries, social enterprises, cooperatives, private small businesses and sole traders will be different depending on local skills, capacity, and opportunity for each place.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

SKYLINE GOVERNANCE WORKSHOP

In March 2019 we brought together representatives from each of the three communities to consider the governance issues landscape-scale community land stewardship raises. We were supported on the day by Mark Walton and Ola Ayorinde of Shared Assets, Sonya Bedford of Stephens Scown LLP, and Matthew Quin of Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University.

The day focussed on strategic questions and not the specific legal form. Who makes the decisions? Who is accountable? How, and by whom, are the activities delivered? And perhaps most importantly, what are the values that we share – the values that will share future decision making?

The benefits of separating the Governance Team (unpaid volunteers, representatives of stakeholders) from the paid Management Team, who in turn direct or commission specific activities, was discussed and accepted.

A lot of time was given to the question of how specific activities could be delivered. It was agreed, in principle, that this would be a strategic decision made by the Governance Team for each place according to local needs. However, we envisaged a range of delivery options that would offer opportunities to existing enterprises, support new for-profit and social enterprises, and provide opportunities for volunteering. Some of the activities may be delivered by the CO itself – perhaps directly by the charitable CO using volunteers, or through the establishment of a trading subsidiary.

The following table is representative of the discussions and is not intended to bind future decisions.

Delivery / Activity	*Existing private enterprise*	*New private enterprise*	*New / Existing social enterprise*	*Community Land Trust staff*	*Community Land Trust volunteers*
Forestry – felling	x	x	x		
Forestry – thinning			x	x	
Forestry – replanting			x	x	x
Commercial food	x	x	x		
Renew. energy install.	x				
Tourism business		x	x	x	
Amenity woodland				x	x

The CO will be ultimately accountable for all of the activities taking place on the land. The Governance Team will take the strategic decisions about which activities are contracted out or run by the CO. The Management Team will manage tendering processes, monitor contracts, develop and report on management plans. The overall objective is to deliver the long-term landscape plan in a way that is commercially and ecologically sustainable.

We also discussed the potential of community shares in the CO as a way of promoting direct accountability and engagement as well as a means for sharing benefits across the community.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

LEGAL FORM OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

The consideration of the most appropriate legal form for the community organisation will depend upon a number of factors including, membership, financing strategy (grants, debt, equity), asset structure – how the asset (land rights) are locked, and the distribution of profits.

Community Benefit Society (CBS)

CBSs put profits back in to the business that ultimately benefits the wider community rather than its own members. CBSs offer a more democratic structure, every member having one vote regardless of the number of shares they have. CBSs are covered by legislative provisions that make it easier to re-organise, and especially to merge, and to raise capital by issuing community shares.

Community Interest Company (CIC)

A CIC is a form of non-charitable limited company. They exist to benefit a community, or with a view to pursuing a social purpose rather than make a profit for shareholders. Some donors will only give to charities or community interest companies due to the protection these vehicles give that funds and assets will be used for stated purposes. As it is a type of limited company it enjoys all benefits of a familiarity and flexibility, limited liability and reduced governance requirements. But it can also specify a range of possible social objectives.

Company with Charitable status

In order to gain charitable status, the company must prove it is set up with aims that are charitable, which is reflected in its constitution. Charities attract considerable tax advantages on charitable expenditure and a benefit of 80% relief from Business Rates. People regularly view charities differently and therefore often enjoy considerable support from funders and other potential supporters.

They can also claim Gift Aid on all donations.

Charities also can run certain fundraising events that may be banned or require a licence for non-charities.

Limited company

Much like a CIC, a limited company allows people to have protection from losses the company may incur. Many things that are relevant to the work of the company can be claimed back as expenses, including cars, travel, clothes and anything else that is used for the workings of the company.

Other structures could be an unincorporated organisation or a co-operative society.

10. HOW DO WE GOVERN THE VALLEY?

STATE AID AND PROCUREMENT

State Aid and Selection Process for the beneficiary

Giving a community exclusive management control over part of the public estate raises issues of State Aid and selection process for the beneficiary. We have not taken professional advice on this issue but we have set out below, after wide consultation, a proposed way forward on each issue.

State Aid

The State Aid question that needs to be answered depends on the tenure that is proposed. In Scotland Government funds are used to enable the community to purchase land. This can be done through the open market or through the community right to buy.

Despite the fact that, to my knowledge, no challenges to this approach have been made in Scotland, the European Commission has made it clear that it considers the trade in land to be a global market therefore any grant to purchase land or any transfer of the ownership of land assets to an organisation does constitute State Aid. The amount of aid provided would be the open market value of the land being bought or transferred. However, we are not proposing the transfer of the freehold to the community, so this kind of aid does not arise.

Our focus is therefore on State Aid issues resulting from a lease given to a community group at an assumed peppercorn rent. The aid that represents State Aid therefore is the amount of the rent foregone for the period of the lease arrangement. Two approaches are possible by which the aid can be compliant, and we propose that both are investigated. Firstly, industrial de minimis (maximum aid threshold of €200,000 over three fiscal years) might be a possibility, and a Full State Aid Notification to the European Commission (where aid thresholds may be defined) might be a possibility.

We propose that for the first pilot stage a lease is offered at peppercorn rent for an area of land where the market rental value for the land over the period of the lease falls below the general de minimis of €200,000 over three fiscal years. Using the de minimis threshold does not require a notification to the Commission so it may be possible to start with a smaller area of land than would otherwise be the ideal for a long-term arrangement, but it would allow activities to take place relatively soon so that issues can be identified and resolved to inform the subsequent full scheme.

As an example, up to 700 Ha could be leased at a rental value of £100 / Ha / year and the value of the rent foregone would be below €200,000 over any 3-year period. 700 Ha is a larger area than that being considered in each of the three valleys in this study.

The full scheme will involve larger areas of land over long lease periods so the maximum amount of aid to be awarded will significantly exceed the de minimis threshold, so the only practical solution is to submit a full notification to the Commission for formal approval. This process might

take 12–18 months to conclusion, but it would provide full assurance that the proposed scheme was compliant from a State Aid perspective. To be able to submit the State Aid notification it is necessary to have finalised Scheme Guidance Notes that will set out, in detail, the scheme aims and objectives, who will be eligible, and what eligible costs are going to be within the scope of the scheme. To determine the amount of aid that would be awarded a robust methodology for the determination and calculation of market rent will need to be established. Different methodologies might be considered, for example, bare ground, current surface crop, or an assessment based on expected future income, but this kind of detail could be worked out as part of the pilot stage.

Given that the Skyline process for the next stage (preparing landscape plans, etc.) is likely to take a minimum of 18 months it would reasonable to plan the scheme developments concurrently with the submission of a full State Aid notification to the European Commission so the land management scheme and the corresponding State Aid scheme are available at the same point.

Selection Process for the beneficiary

The offering of an opportunity for a long-term lease or management agreement to a community for a significant area of land at a peppercorn rent will require a formal selection and assessment process. One option would be to issue tenders under a procurement framework, an alternative option would be to use a grant application and appraisal process, and there may be other options. The pilot exercise would be used to investigate these options and make a recommendation for the most appropriate one given the circumstances of this proposed scheme.

The Welsh Government's aim in transferring the management rights is not to maximise commercial income but support a wider public benefit and it might be that a general procurement process is not necessarily the most suitable mechanism for selecting the community organisation to take on this responsibility. The Welsh Government intends to forego rental income to achieve a range of benefits, social, economic, and cultural (perhaps explicitly linked to the Well-being Act), and so it might be possible to establish a process to invite applications through an open competition process. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach need to be reviewed so that an informed decision can be taken.

CONCLUSIONS:

- State Aid does arise – either through a grant to purchase the land or through the value of rent foregone under a lease agreement.
- State Aid issues that follow from assisting the community to purchase the land lead us to conclude that freehold acquisition is not the preferred approach and to focus on a lease agreement with nominal rent.
- We are proposing to undertake an initial pilot exercise on a small area of land to consider and report on the following issues amongst others:
  - Assess how to calculate the rental value foregone.
  - Investigate what legal arrangements will be needed for a fully operational scheme.
  - Prepare and submit a full State Aid Notification to the European Commission so that the aid provided through the full scheme will be compliant.
  - Investigate options for the selection process necessary to award the long-term management agreement to an appropriate local community organisation.

11. HOW DO YOU BUILD A VALLEY?

HOW DOES THE LEARNING FROM THE SKYLINE FEASIBILITY STUDY INFORM THE PROCESS FOR BUILDING A COMMUNITY VISION FOR LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP?

11. HOW DO YOU BUILD A VALLEY?

Taking our learning from our experiences during this feasibility programme, we have mapped out a proposed process for delivering for long-term community stewardship.

It is a complex process that could take up to 18 months to deliver. We have set out the key features here.

PREREQUISITES

What are the things you need to start the process?

- A trusted community organisation with the leadership, vision and capacity to champion the process.
- A community willing to take control of the future – and to take a risk, starting a process when the end
- point is uncertain.
- Land close to the community with the potential of coming under community stewardship and with a landowner willing to engage in a dialogue about community control.
- The funding necessary to engage the agencies and organisations needed to support the process (described below). The size of the budget will depend on the size of the land under consideration and the complexity of the future vision.

SKYLINE PROCESS OUTPUTS

What are the planned outputs at the end of the process?

Tangible outputs

- A 50-year landscape vision developed by the community for future generations.
- A 10-year action plan – the list of activities the community would like to implement over the first decade – some commercial, some social and community projects.
- Establishing the legal and governance structures for the organisation that will manage the landscape.
- The negotiated documentation for the transfer of land rights.

Intangible outputs

- Mutual trust between community, landowner and land manager.
- A wide understanding across all sections of the community of the vision, plans and governance structures.
- A strengthened sense of self-confidence and efficacy – belief in the power to change.
- An appropriate level and form of consent from the community to proceed with stewardship.

11. HOW DO YOU BUILD A VALLEY?

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Who are the people and organisations that will be actively involved in the process?

- Community organisation willing to act as the Skyline facilitator (host) and coordinate the work locally – perhaps with the capacity to be the host for the Skyline Project Manager who will oversee the process.
- Landowner – representatives of the landowner, and where appropriate, the land manager –
- will need to be involved form the start. Their knowledge of the land, its history and potential will be vital.
- Ecologists able to advise on the existing landscape and the best way to manage the future for nature.
- Artist facilitators – a person or organisation skilled in arts-based facilitation that can support the widest conversation across the community.
- Legal advisor will be needed both for the interpretation of the existing titles, leases, and restrictive covenants, but also the establishment of the new community organisation.
- Stakeholder Group. A Stakeholder group will advise but not lead the process (the community organisation needs to be in control of the process and the outputs). The Stakeholder Group might consist of representatives of the following organisations and project partners:
  - The host community group.
  - Skyline process champion – could be from another Skyline community.
  - Landowner / Land manager.
  - Local Authority, and where appropriate Health Board and Fire Service.
  - Appropriate third sector organisations with experience relevant to the proposed landscape vision.

11. HOW DO YOU BUILD A VALLEY?

THE PROCESS

There isn't a rigid process. It will need to adapt depending on the landscape, the community, their dreams and visions. It is likely to take 12–18 months to complete. In Section 5 we outlined the activities we undertook as part of the Skyline Feasibility work. Some of those activities, and others, could be used to develop the vision. We divided the process broadly into the three phases of Re-membering, Re-visioning, and Re-claiming.

RE-MEMBERING

We start by remembering. Remembering what has been forgotten and what has been lost. The present can dominate our sense of place and may limit our ability to envision a different future. By remembering we recognise and celebrate the past and establish the inevitability of change. We ground the process in memories that are personal and incontestable. Acknowledge that everyone has a different understanding of where we are now and a different story to tell about how we got here. We use this foundation to build understanding of shared values and sow a seed of community stewardship.

Activities for re-membering:

- Time-line. We start by mapping both the personal, local and global event onto time-lines. Time-lines that can extend back before memory into geological time or go forward into an imagined future.
- Mapping memories. Mapping memories on to the landscape – routes to school, places we used to play in the river, where the library and the swimming pool used to be. Talking, remembering, sharing, capturing and sharing memories and relating to place.
- Telling stories. Creating a space to tell stories, fact or fiction, about place – spoken, written, in pictures, or performed.
- Create a safe space. Develop a place that people feel safe to remember and to share. Share food as you share stories. Listen, be creative. Reach across the community. Not everyone will want or be able to come along to the workshop in the community hall. To engage with some sections of the community go to the Men's Shed, the mother and toddler group, the school, the elderly day-care centre.

The outputs from the process of remembering, some tangible, some less so.

- A map that layers memory onto the present geography.
- A list of the values that the binds the community together. Values that can be used later in the process to guide choices and decisions that need to be made.
- Growing familiarity across the community with the idea of landscape-scale community stewardship.
- The likelihood that some people within the community will become inspired with the idea of landscape-scale community stewardship and may become future champions.
- A start to what will become an important and lengthy dialogue with the landowners and land managers.

11. HOW DO YOU BUILD A VALLEY?

RE-VISIONING

Once we have worked together to remember we can start the process of re-visioning – imagining a different future for the landscape. A vision that is grounded in the shared values and the needs of the community and shaped by long-term vision that the community develops through the re-visioning process.

- Dreaming. Postcards from the future. Writing a postcard that you might receive from your grandchildren writing to you maybe 50 or even 100 years in the future.
- Learning. Get inspiration from visiting other established community land projects. There are thriving projects with over two decades experience.
- Expert walkabouts. Walk the land with historians, ecologists, foresters, entrepreneurs. Understand the landscape from different perspectives.
- Listening. Listen to all the voices in the community. What do you hear? Listen to the experience of other community land projects. Listen to the ecologists.
- Distilling. Distil the outcome of all these activities (and more) into a long-term vision for the landscape and a list of the priority projects that the community would like to see delivered first.
- Share. Share the visions with as many people as you can. Listen, refine – share again.

The re-visioning process will lead to the creation of two important documents or plans:

- A 50-year landscape vision. Free from the constraints of the current land management regime the community is free to imagine a future where the landscape can meet their needs – economic, cultural, educational, as well providing a better home for nature.
- A 10-year plan. A list of the activities that the community would like to deliver in the first decade.

RE-CLAIMING

Armed with a long-term vision for the landscape and a specific list of priorities for the first 10 years we can start the process of reclaiming. What needs to be done to make this a reality? Validating the details of the plans, working with nature, working with the community.

Once the landscape design processes have been completed it is time to make decisions – do we proceed to landscape stewardship?

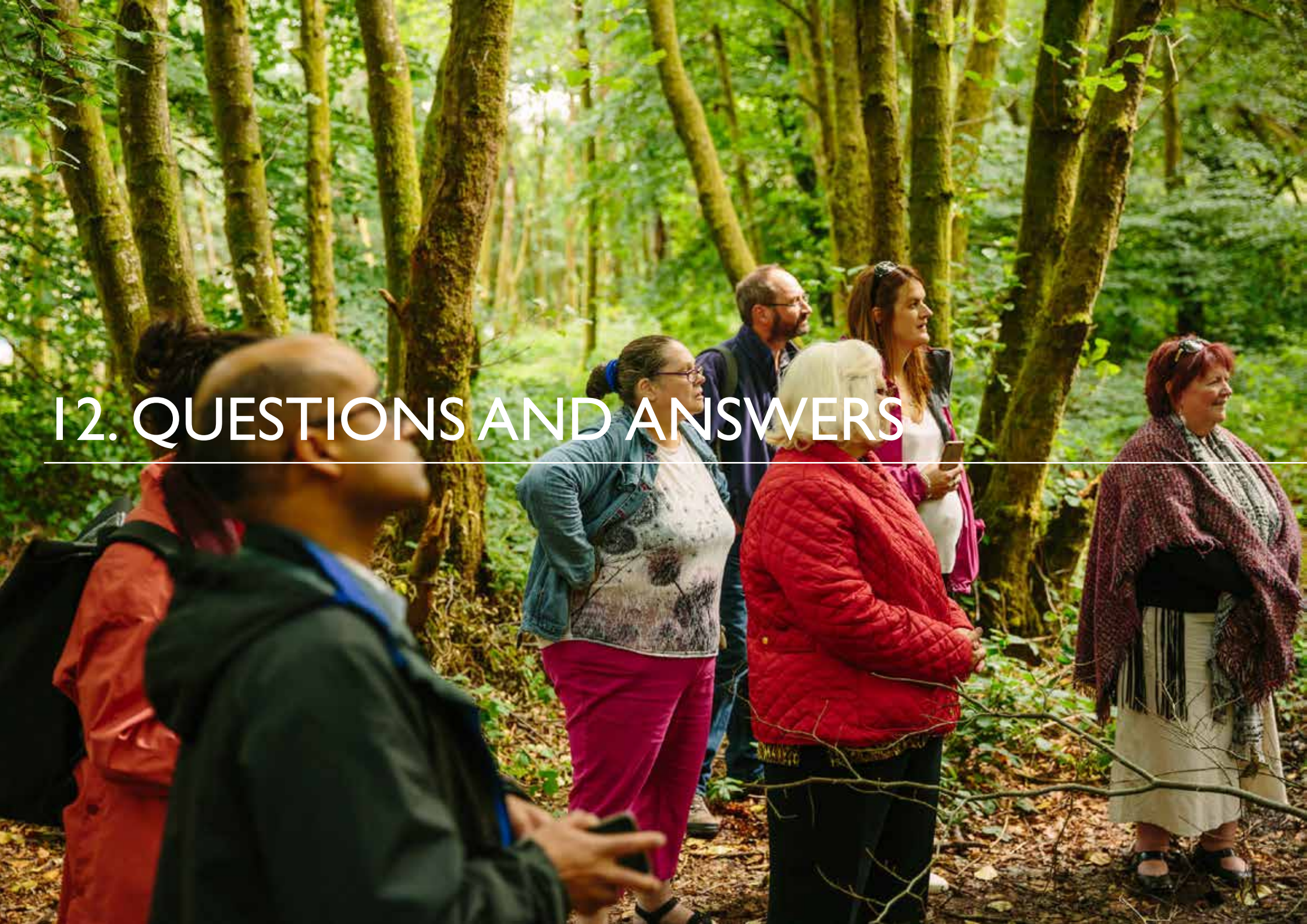
There will be questions to be asked and answered by the community and the landowner.

Questions for the landowner / land manager

- Has the community developed a deliverable landscape plan?
- Are the plans for delivering the plan in place?
- Are there provisions in the lease or management agreement to demand remedies if the community fails to meet agreed standards?
- Is there a process of reviewing delivery of the 10-year plan, for the notification of changes to the plan?
- Is the plan compatible with any policies or standards that need to be adhered to in the long-term?

Questions or the community?

- Have all sections of the community been given the opportunity to review and discuss the plans?
- Do you have evidence that there is broad support for the plans?
- Have the governance team of the organisation that will deliver the plan reviewed the risk register and delivery plans?



12. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

12. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Here we have collected together some of the questions and challenges that have arisen throughout the Skyline feasibility study. We hope this will start a discussion about whether and how landscape-scale community land stewardship could be delivered in Wales.

From the evidence we have gathered we have started to outline potential answers to these questions. The conversation that will follow publication of this report will be an opportunity to consult widely on these and other questions.

SOME OF THE LAND IS VERY POOR QUALITY – IS IT AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY?

The experience from Scotland, often on similarly poor soils and steep terrain, demonstrates that economic and social value can be created through forestry and wood processing, energy generation, tourism and horticulture. The economic activity needs to be closely matched to the potential so that the resulting enterprises are sustainable for the long-term.

CAN THE BENEFITS OUTLINED BY SKYLINE BE DELIVERED THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LAND MANAGERS WITHOUT A TRANSFER OF RIGHTS TO THE COMMUNITY?

Taking control of the landscape was one of the driving factors for the communities in the Skyline study and is arguably the one thing that communities have never been granted. A partnership between professional land managers and a community would not be perceived as a partnership of equals.

CAN COMMUNITY LAND STEWARDSHIP RESULT IN COMMUNITIES BEING INDEPENDENT OF FURTHER GRANT FUNDING?

This very much depends on both the income that can be generated from the land but also the ambition of the community. Experience from Scotland suggests that grant funding to cover paid project management has been vital in the early years of the community organisation. In Wales the, typically smaller, woodland projects are dependent on further grant income. The community's ambition to develop projects that do not have sustainable business models may also drive further grant applications for improving access or developing community buildings.

SHOULDN'T WE CONTINUE WITH SMALL STEPS – COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS WITH EXISTING LAND MANAGERS RATHER THAN TRY IT ALL AT ONCE AND RISK FAILURE?

There are many small-scale initiatives within the Valleys – partnership projects between landowners and community groups. Some of these projects have been very successful. But smaller scale, short-term projects necessarily have limited impact. There is evidence that asset transfer projects can bring about transformative changes. That potential should be explored in the Valleys.

12. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WILL THE COMMUNITY BE TEMPTED TO DISREGARD ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN ORDER TO MAXIMISE SHORT-TERM INCOME OR JOBS?

In all three communities the landscape plans were a balance of economic development and environmental enhancement. There was also a strong and instinctive understanding that they would become stewards or champions of the local environment. But it should also be remembered that the community will continue to require felling licence with replanting plans. Planning restrictions will still apply. Any lease agreement will also be subject to compliance to the agreed landscape plan.

IS THERE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CAPABLE OF DELIVERING SUCH A COMPLEX PROJECT?

A Skyline project will require leadership and determination to both establish the project and to manage it for the long-term. The 12–18 months of the Skyline process, prior to transfer of management control, will indicate if there is sufficient community leadership to deliver the project. For the longer term, leadership will be distributed across the many enterprises – the governance of the Community Organisation, but also the management of the commercial and social enterprises that are delivering some of the services.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

The investment is the cost of the Skyline process of landscape design (£50-100k) plus value of the notional rent foregone under a lease. There will be some infrastructure investment, tracks, water, services, wooden buildings but this will be spread over decades as the community plan is slowly developed and realised. These investments could be met from existing grant funders and may not require direct investment from the public purse. The project will attract social and potentially private investment into new business ventures (forestry products, horticulture, etc.) so the impact on the public purse will be limited.

THE LAND TITLE CAN BE VERY COMPLICATED – CAN COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP BE DELIVERED?

Land ownership in the Valleys is seldom simple. There are leases and deeds with restrictive covenants, obligations and retained rights which will need to be professionally investigated during the planning process so that landscape plans reflect the title restrictions.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION BECOMES INSOLVENT?

One of the provisions of the lease would be that it terminates on liquidation so that the land would return to WG control. It should be noted that at the time of writing none of the Scottish community land trusts have ceased trading.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION BEING CONTROLLED BY A SMALL GROUP FOR SPECIFIC INTERESTS?

A good governance structure is essential with the ultimate control being the community members which need to be numerous and representative of the community at large. But remembering that these structures depend on having shared values and goals.

ISN'T THIS JUST ANOTHER THING FOR THE ALREADY OVERSTRETCHED AND OLDER COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS TO HAVE TO MANAGE?

There is a role for volunteer Trustees, but the majority of the landscape planning and delivery will be done by the paid management team and by local social and private organisations working in partnership with the Community Trust.

12. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

The success of Skyline cannot be assessed through one measure – jobs created or economic activity. It is, by design, a programme with multiple benefits. Evaluation would require the establishment of a long-term assessment of well-being, undertaken with the community.

WHAT IS PREVENTING COMMUNITIES SUCCESSFULLY MANAGING BUILDING AND LAND ASSETS?

This was a question the Quirk Review asked in 2007. Quirk concluded then that the reasons, which still resonate today, included: risk aversion in public bodies, a narrow focus by public bodies on financial measures, and community access to the technical skills and organisational development needed.

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13. REFERENCES

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