Making Land Work: Case Studies in Collaboration

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Executive summary

Questions of who owns and controls land are woven deep into our history. However, with the notable exception of Scotland, there has been relatively little recent public debate regarding the ownership and control of our natural assets. In contrast, the changing roles of the state, the market and communities in providing services, and the ownership of buildings and other infrastructure, have been hotly contested.

Constraints on public finances and the retrenchment of the state, both locally and nationally, are beginning to bring issues of land ownership back onto the public agenda. Whilst public authorities and other landowners are seeking new approaches to the management of their environmental assets, many communities would like greater control over how their local environment is managed. There is a growing interest in activities such as food growing, generation of renewable energy, wood fuel production and outdoor educational and health services, all of which require access to land.

Collaborative approaches to land management can help provide benefits to landowners and communities whilst improving local environmental quality, without requiring a transfer of ownership of the asset.

This report provides case studies of four examples of shared management of a range of different environmental assets that are in private, charitable and local and national public ownership. Using semi-structured interviews with community enterprises and landowners, it identifies some of the benefits of shared management, the success factors that make collaborative approaches work, and the particular role of intermediaries in the process.
Key findings

1. Benefits of shared management

Management of environmental assets by community enterprises can deliver a wide range of benefits.

Shared management can enable landowners to deliver their objectives whilst improving the quality of the asset in a way that is cost neutral or reduces their management costs.

For community enterprises, an appropriate lease or management agreement provides access to land, enabling them to deliver their social mission whilst removing the hurdle of the cost of land purchase.

Local communities benefit from greater access to the environment and the delivery of a range of services that provide jobs, training, resources, and lead to improvements in health and wellbeing.

Bringing undermanaged land back into productive management improves its environmental quality and increases biodiversity. Income earned by the community enterprise can be reinvested in the site rather than being swallowed up by the central budgets of larger landowning organisations.

2. What makes it work?

A formal agreement negotiated between the landowner and the community enterprise is essential to ensure that both parties have clear expectations and agreed rights, responsibilities and liabilities.

Each of the parties to the agreement should have realistic expectations of the other. Community enterprises need to understand the constraints within which landowners are operating. These might include planning restrictions, health and safety or wildlife designations. Landowners need to be aware of the differing levels of skills, experience and entrepreneurialism that may be found in in the communities they are working with.

There is a wide range of skills and attributes that both parties require in order to develop a successful relationship. As well as communication, negotiation, project management, business and technical skills, individuals involved in negotiating the shared management of land need to demonstrate perseverance, resilience and passion in order to withstand set backs and overcome difficulties.
Landowners wishing to engage community enterprises in land management should create clear policies that will ensure that staff in all parts of the organisation can support the process effectively.

3. Role of leadership

The development of a shared approach to the management of environmental assets may be driven by the landowner, the community or by an “intrapreneur” who is moving from inside the landowning organisation to lead the community enterprise. In each case there is likely to be at least one individual who takes an intermediary role in which they move between being an “insider” and an “outsider” within their own organisation or community. This role carries stresses that require particular leadership skills and attributes.

Recommendations

1. Community enterprises should establish at the outset the social and economic benefits they are aiming to deliver, and how they will measure their impact.

2. Landowners and external funders should consider whether they are able to make funds available to enable community enterprises to get access to independent legal advice.

3. Community enterprises should not be expected to accept leases, contracts or management agreements that will prevent them from becoming financially sustainable.

4. The landowner needs to be aware of the level of entrepreneurialism of the community enterprise and clear about how this may impact on its delivery. The community enterprise needs to be clear about what it can realistically deliver and the level of independence it wants.

5. A team with a shared vision and complementary skills is needed to deliver a successful project.

6. Landowners that wish to engage community organisations should develop clear policies to support this approach at an early stage. These should encourage staff to take a flexible and entrepreneurial approach to delivering shared public value.

7. In any shared management approach, the leadership role of the intermediary, and the specific stresses and pressures of that role, should be recognised and supported.
Introduction

Community control of public assets

The control and management of land has a long and contested history in the United Kingdom. From the creation of a landed class of knights and barons following the Norman invasion of 1066, through the enclosures of the commons, the Levellers, Diggers, Cooperative and Chartist movements, to the development of Garden Cities in the early twentieth century, it has been a significant issue in our society and our politics.¹

In comparison there has been little public debate regarding land ownership since the end of the First World War, despite significant changes in ownership patterns during the twentieth century.² In recent years however, the role of communities in the management and control of assets has become a live issue once more. The Quirk Review in 2007 highlighted the potential for greater community ownership, control and management of public assets, the land and buildings owned by central or local government and their agencies.³ The review was followed by the establishment in 2008 of the Asset Transfer Unit to support the transfer of land and buildings from public bodies to community and voluntary organisations.

Under the Coalition Government this agenda has continued to gather pace, with the Localism Act introducing new rights for communities to “build” affordable housing, “bid” for assets of community value, and “challenge” to take over local services.

Natural assets: a special case?

Whilst a combination of new rights and reduced public spending has resulted in a wide range of public assets being transferred to community ownership or control these have tended to be focused on buildings and services. Proposals to sell off or transfer the ownership of land or other natural assets have proved highly contentious. Whilst the Government succeeded in transferring the ownership of the nation’s canals to a new charity, the Canal and River Trust, proposals to sell off or transfer ownership of a large proportion of the public forest estate met with vehement opposition and were dropped.

As well as the emotional attachment we have to land there is a range of practical and financial reasons why community ownership of some environmental assets may be difficult or undesirable. These include the need to provide consistent and coherent management to important habitats, the spreading of risks across a large asset base, and the rising cost of land as it becomes an increasingly attractive tradable asset for investors and speculators.
Many social movements require access to land in order to deliver the social and environmental changes they wish to see. These include local food growing, renewable energy production, community woodland management and a wide range of educational, health and cultural activities. If there are political, practical, financial and environmental reasons that militate against community ownership of land perhaps new forms of collaborative or shared management can be achieved which deliver benefits to the landowner, local communities and the environment.

The research highlights four case study examples where community enterprises are taking on the management of land from four different types of landowner: a local authority, a private utility company, a large national charity and a national public agency. It highlights some of the benefits of shared management and some of the common factors that made the case study examples successful. It also highlights the particular pressures faced by those individuals who act as intermediaries in the development of shared management approaches.

Community enterprise
The term “community enterprise” is used throughout this report rather than seeking to differentiate between organisations on the basis of their legal structure or the source of their income. Whether trading commercially or securing grant funding, the organisations described here seek to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits with a degree of entrepreneurialism. They are rooted in their local communities and demonstrate imagination, initiative and a willingness to undertake new projects. They are not run for private profit. They have paid staff and reinvest any profits in their social purpose.

Environmental assets
Environmental assets are urban and rural green spaces, woodlands, waterways and coastal areas. They may include entirely natural landscapes as well as man made infrastructure such as canals or harbours. In many cases a building or depot may form an integral part of an environmental asset for operational, recreational or economic purposes.

1 A history of community asset ownership, Steve Wyler, Development Trusts Association (2009)
2 Common ownership of land, infrastructure and natural assets, Dan Gregory and Kate Swade, published in Making It Mutual: The ownership revolution that Britain needs, ResPublica (2013)
3 Making assets work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets, Communities and Local Government (2007)
The case studies

• **Broadclyst Community Farm** has been established on farmland owned by the National Trust as part of the Killerton Estate near Exeter in Devon. The land was offered to the community by the Trust. Members of the local community established Broadclyst Community Farm in order to manage the land. It offers local people the opportunity to get involved in growing affordable, locally grown fresh food whilst improving the environmental quality of the farm.

  For more detail see page 21.

• **Chiltern Rangers CIC** is a local authority spin out, established by the staff of the Woodland Service at Wycombe District Council. In September 2013 it took on the contract to manage fourteen of the Council's twenty-one urban woodland sites. Chiltern Rangers will improve the quality of the woodland whilst providing volunteering, training and educational opportunities for school children, young people and adults.

  For more detail see page 25.

• **Neroche Woodlanders** is a newly established social enterprise that is negotiating with the Forestry Commission to take on the management of woodland that is owned by the Crown Estate and leased by the Commission. Neroche Woodlanders will manage the woodland in order to improve biodiversity, produce woodland products and deliver volunteering, training and education opportunities for local people.

  For more detail see page 29.

• **East Reservoir Community Garden** is a site owned by Thames Water and managed by London Wildlife Trust in the London Borough of Hackney. The relationship between London Wildlife Trust and Thames Water has developed to the extent that they are now partners in two significant urban wetland restoration projects in the city. The projects will provide habitat improvements, increase public access and provide educational and training opportunities to local people.

  For more detail see page 33.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the community enterprise and the landowner in each case, except for Thames Water who were unavailable.

Short films of each of the case studies can be seen at: [https://vimeo.com/sharedassets](https://vimeo.com/sharedassets)
1. Benefits of shared management

1.1 For the landowner

The shared management of the asset enables the landowner to meet wider organisational or strategic objectives. These objectives may be charitable, social or commercial depending on the nature of the landowning organisation.

- The establishment of a community farm helps the National Trust to deliver on its charitable purposes of preserving and improving the landscape whilst widening public access and enjoyment.

- Working with London Wildlife Trust enables Thames Water to meet its corporate objectives of informing the public about water safety and conservation as well as improving the biodiversity of the sites and improving public access.

- Spinning out the Woodland Service to form a new CIC enables Wycombe District Council to maintain the level of its current service whilst reducing costs, delivering on the Council’s strategic objectives of environmental sustainability, value for money and community engagement.

- Entering into a management agreement with Neroche Woodlanders enables the Forestry Commission to fulfill its commitment to maintaining the forest estate as a public asset, providing both public and environmental benefits.
In all cases the social or community enterprise is, or will be, delivering a high level of public engagement, increasing the level of public access and use of the asset. Uses include food growing, woodland management, improving biodiversity as well as leisure and recreation.

Community enterprises bring specialist skills in working with specific interest groups such as children and adults with special education needs, excluded teenagers or people experiencing long-term unemployment. They also bring specialist technical land management skills. Often these are not locally available within the landowner’s own workforce.

“The social enterprise brings local knowledge, local enthusiasm and local affinity with these woodlands that is hard for us to replicate.” (Forestry Commission)

In each of the case studies, the community enterprise is delivering a wide range of services in order to maximise its social impact and generate income from a number of different sources. This creates a diversity of activities on the site that can include practical land management, education, training, recreation, health and corporate teambuilding, all of which contribute to its management.

The impact on costs varied between the case studies from being cost neutral to providing cost savings to the landowner. In all cases however the community enterprise is able to attract new forms of funding (grants, commercial income, community shares etc.) which would not be available to the landowner working alone.

1.2 For the community enterprise

The primary benefit to the community enterprise is the provision of access to the land itself. This provides a physical base at which, and from which, it can carry out its organisational and social, economic and environmental objectives.

“Our absolute primary purpose is to enable greater social benefit to come from this forest.” (Neroche Woodlanders)
By leasing the land, whether at a commercial or sub-commercial rent, the community enterprise is able to significantly reduce the cost of entry into the market. Land prices in the UK are high, with farmland prices currently at record levels.\(^4\) By removing the cost of land purchase from their start up costs community enterprises are able to concentrate on accumulating working capital and have a much lower threshold to cross before they can begin to deliver activities that meet their social, economic and environmental objectives.

By working in partnership with a larger organisation that may have other significant land holdings, the community enterprise is able to benefit from its landowner’s insurances, technical skills and experience and reduce its liabilities. The landowner can also act as a market for the enterprise’s goods and services, e.g. Broadclyst Farm provides fresh vegetables to the National Trust restaurant at Killerton House.

1.3 For the local community

The local community benefits from shared management of local environmental assets in number of ways. The primary benefit is improved access provided by the diverse range of activities delivered by the community enterprise. These tend to focus particularly on working with excluded and vulnerable groups but also frequently provide open days, family days or general public access.

The public health benefits of undertaking activities in the natural environment are well documented.\(^5\) By increasing participation in land management activities the community enterprises also provide opportunities for improving the health and wellbeing of local people.

“If two or three weeks ago one of the guys who’s a member of one of our groups said, ‘I’m really pleased I came out this morning. I was really struggling and I’ve had a fantastic morning.’ That is worth millions to me.” (Chiltern Rangers CIC)

By providing employment, volunteering opportunities, training and apprenticeships, community enterprises deliver local economic benefit from the work they do to improve the local environment. They often use small local contractors to undertake work that they cannot do themselves rather than large framework contracts with national or multinational cor-

\(^4\) RICS/RAU Rural Land Market Survey H1 2013, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

\(^5\) Health and Natural Environments – An evidence based information pack, Natural England (2012)
porations, keeping the money they spend within the local economy for longer. The social enterprise model actively seeks to deliver community benefits rather than just acting to protect the asset.

A number of interviewees spoke of the increased sense of local “ownership” that came with increased participation. Whilst the freehold ownership of the land has not changed, the fact that local people are more involved in the day-to-day management of the asset, and experience a more immediate benefit from it, creates a greater sense of belonging, engagement and local control.

1.4 For the environment

Many natural assets are in a poor state due a lack of active management. The Forestry Commission’s indicators show that almost 50% of England’s woodlands are undermanaged. Many areas of land owned by local authorities or private companies are not core to their operations and are left under a basic maintenance regime. In many cases these could be productively managed in ways that deliver local benefits and improve environmental quality. Agricultural land that has been farmed using intensive or monoculture techniques is often of poor environmental quality with low levels of biodiversity. Community enterprises with a commitment to environmental sustainability are able to deliver environmental improvements and improvements in biodiversity. They are often able to use traditional and low impact methods, with large numbers of trainees or volunteers providing the necessary workforce.

Within large public, charitable or corporate landowners there is little incentive for a local land manager, no matter how entrepreneurial, to develop new activities and income streams. Any profits are likely to be returned to central budgets and distributed throughout the organisation. A community enterprise is able to use any income raised through its activities to reinvest in the site, creating an incentive for a more entrepreneurial approach and benefiting the local environment.

“We are keen to see the restoration of some historic features such as recreating nine or ten fields from the current three, improving the hedgerow management and restoring wet areas.” (National Trust)

Corporate Plan Performance Indicators and Woodland Indicators 2013, Forestry Commission England
The increased public participation provided by community management of environmental assets also promotes the environmental awareness of those involved in working on the site, undertaking training courses or just visiting and observing the activities being undertaken.

“I think part of the education for all of us is making the land yield something for us whilst maintaining its quality at the same time.” (Neroche Woodlanders)

2. What makes it work?

2.1 A negotiated management agreement

In each of the cases studied here there is a clear, formal agreement between the landowner and the community enterprise. This may take the form of one or more of the following: a contract for a service, a lease, a memorandum of understanding, a management agreement or a set of method statements.

The agreements create a clear set of expectations on both sides. They can set out the short, medium and long term aims for the site as well as the day-to-day methodologies, devolved responsibilities and monitoring and reporting arrangements. In most cases the agreement had been negotiated over a period of several months and explicitly included the objectives of both parties.

In the cases of Neroche Woodlanders and Chiltern Rangers the approach being taken is a pioneering one with no organisational precedent. This has required significant internal negotiation within the respective landowning organisations in order to secure the authority to develop the agreement. It has also been necessary to explain to colleagues in other departments (legal, procurement, human resources) the nature of the agreement and how it differs from similar purely commercial arrangements. In contrast, the National Trust sought to remain as close as possible to the terms of its standard commercial farm lease.

The extent to which the landowner has retained rights to the management of the site, and the responsibility for liabilities, varies considerably between the four organisations studied here, reflecting the extent to which they are willing or able to devolve responsibility for the management of the site to a third party. In many cases the sites carry significant public liability risks.
For many community organisations it may be the first time that they have had to negotiate or draw up leases or contracts. Access to independent legal advice and support can be critical in ensuring that the future development of the project is not going to be hampered by a restrictive clause or agreement.

2.2 Realistic expectations

Both parties need to have realistic expectations of what the other can deliver.

Landowners reported that the community enterprise was often naïve about what could and could not be delivered and why things had to be done in a particular way. These might be external constraints such as planning restrictions, health and safety concerns or wildlife designations. They might also be internal procedures such as getting sign-offs and authorisations. Landowners felt that this could often lead to misunderstandings regarding the reasons for a decision or a delay in the process.

Community enterprises felt that landowners needed to be aware of the steep learning curve that they were often experiencing when it came to negotiating a lease or drawing up a contract. It is often the first time that they have been required to undertake these sorts of tasks and they are often unfamiliar with the legal and technical issues involved. They felt that they were often treated in the same way as a commercial organisation which is used to the procurement or contracting process, and which has the legal and technical expertise to move the process along rapidly. The enterprise may also have specific requirements without which their business will not be viable. These might include a minimum length of agreement that will allow an investment to be recouped, or a lease that enables operational structures to be constructed on the site.

For both parties there is a need for clear and concise communication to ensure that each side is aware of the needs and limitations of the other.

2.3 Skills and attributes

**Negotiation and project management**

Good negotiation skills are required in order to ensure that both parties are able to identify a mutual benefit from the proposals.
“It is vital to be able to understand what the next person or organisation needs and turn your requirement into their need – because you need to convince them that you have a joint objective.” (East Reservoir Community Garden)

Even small projects may be complex and dependent on the involvement of a range of different actors, with a number of mutually dependent processes occurring at any one time. Good project management skills including being time-bound, structured and organised can help to move things along smoothly.

Communication

Most community projects are initiated by a small group of enthusiasts, however in order to be successful they require the consent and support of the wider community. Good communication skills can help to publicise the project and engage others in making it happen. It was noted that in some cases people who choose to undertake practical land-based work do so, at least in part, because they do not enjoy engaging with people. It is important that a project has people who are happy to talk to others and understand the importance of good communication.

It is also important for landowners to be able to effectively communicate any administrative, technical or legal issues that may impact on the use of the site.

Business and technical skills

A new business or enterprising project requires people with core business skills such as finance and business planning. Training and support may be required to help passionate people with vision and practical skills to translate their ideas into a business plan. Recruiting a Board or project team provides an opportunity to bring in new people with specific skills and experience.

Practical land-based skills are also required in order to transform a vision into reality.

“You have to be practical enough to light a fire and cut a tree down.” (Neroche Woodlanders)
Personal attributes

Interviewees also identified a range of personal attributes necessary for the development of shared management arrangements. These included the ability to listen, observe and compromise, and being adaptable, open to new ideas and willing to innovate.

It was also recognised that developing new approaches can be difficult. All had experienced changes and knock-backs to their original plans. Perseverance and resilience were required to keep working towards objectives when it seemed as though it would be impossible to get an agreement.

Most importantly, all of the projects demonstrated a high level of passion for and commitment to their vision.

“Whatever you are doing you have to believe in it. You have to be focussed enough to go and make it happen. Above all else you need to be passionate.” (Chiltern Rangers)

2.4 Clear internal policies

For landowners it may be the first time that shared management has been negotiated for a piece of land or other asset. This can lead to internal issues as different departments seek to implement their standard procedures for a commercial contract or disposal. These may not be appropriate for the development of collaborative management approaches that are delivering wider benefits for the organisation and the local community.

The development of internal policies or protocols which enable and encourage leases or other shared management and governance approaches would help to facilitate similar agreements elsewhere. In the case of Wycombe District Council a parallel was drawn with their experience of undertaking several asset transfers of buildings to community organisations.

“Every time we would have the same conversations with the same colleagues. Now we have a community asset transfer policy agreed by the Council. So instead of Estates saying each time ‘we want a commercial rent’, that is no longer the starting point.” (Wycombe District Council)
3. Role of leadership

In two of the case study examples (Chiltern Rangers CIC and Neroche Woodlanders) members of staff from the landowning organisation are also founding members of the new community enterprise that is negotiating access to the land.

There are particular issues of leadership that are faced by those who are in an intermediary position, in particular those who move from being “an insider” within the landowner organisation to being “an outsider” during the course of the negotiation.

Being an insider confers some advantages in terms of knowing the site, its history, current management and relationships as well as understanding how the landowning organisation works. However any figure acting in an intermediary or transitional role can also be treated with suspicion by both parties, not fully understood or trusted by either.

“In a sense I’ve run with the fox and hunted with the hounds – and having someone in that role has been quite important.” (Neroche Woodlanders)
There also comes a moment during the negotiation process where the intermediary moves from being considered as part of the landowning organisation to being viewed and treated as an external third party. Despite the fact that they are still employed by the landowning organisation, they are excluded at this point from internal discussions about the negotiation and require their own independent legal advice. This can be a difficult and isolating experience as they seek to inhabit two roles with radically different power relationships to their current employer and future client.

“Part of being a pioneer means that you have to learn hard lessons. You go from being part of the beast to working against it, and you can’t fight it on your own. You just need a bit of support and leverage, and it has to be done in a particular legal context. It can be really tough.” (Chiltern Rangers CIC)

“Resilience,” “patience” and “a thick skin” were all attributes that interviewees felt were important for intermediaries to possess. In order to be successful, intermediaries need a clear vision, and they need to know what their new businesses needs from an agreement in order to be successful.
Discussion and recommendations

Benefits

The case studies demonstrate that the management of environmental assets by community enterprises can deliver benefits to the landowner, the enterprise, the local community and the environment, in ways that are either cost neutral or deliver financial savings to the landowner.

If the delivery of social value is a key driver for landowners entering into shared management arrangements, then it will be critical for community enterprises to measure their social and economic impacts, as well as the environmental improvements they are delivering. It remains to be seen to what extent the landowner may wish to drive this aspect of the arrangement. Landowners, particularly public sector landowners, may wish to specify social and economic outcomes as part of the contract or management agreements. Community shareholders or social investors may also wish to see the social value that is being delivered in return for their investment.

♦ Community enterprises should establish at the outset the social and economic benefits they are aiming to deliver, and how they will measure their impact.

Making it work

The negotiation of a mutually acceptable management agreement is critical to ensuring the success of a collaborative approach to managing environmental assets. Such agreements take time to develop and require good negotiation and communication skills on both sides.

It is important to note that there is a significant power differential between a community enterprise, which may be small, new and lacking resources, and a large landowning organisation, whether it be public, private or charitable. Community enterprises therefore require access to independent legal advice early in the process. This will help them draw up and negotiate agreements, leases and contracts that are fair, and which will enable them to meet the needs of their organisations as they grow.

Furthermore community enterprises should not be expected to take on leases that a commercial organisation would not agree to: for instance where the period is too short for the organisation to recoup the cost of any investment, or where their ability to develop their operations is unduly restricted.
It is clear from the case studies that the level of entrepreneurialism varies considerably between different organisations. Some individuals are making a new business and a new role for themselves, whilst others are undertaking the work in their spare time.

A wide range of skills and attributes were identified as necessary by interviewees. Often these will not be found in the same person. It may be necessary for different people to take the lead at different times as the needs of the project change, e.g. from campaigning, to negotiation, to delivery.

In several cases the main frustrations, from both sides, were due to processes within the landowning organisation. Departments and support functions not directly involved with the negotiation were felt to have restrictive interpretations of policies, or established ways of procuring services. These made it difficult to progress an unusual or novel approach to developing an agreement.

♦ Landowners and external funders should consider whether they are able to make funds available to enable community enterprises to get access to independent legal advice.

♦ Community enterprises should not be expected to accept leases, contracts or management agreements that will prevent them from becoming financially sustainable.

♦ The landowner needs to be aware of the level of entrepreneurialism of the community enterprise and clear about how this may impact on its delivery. The community enterprise needs to be clear about what it can realistically deliver and the level of independence it wants.

♦ A team with a shared vision and complementary skills is needed to deliver a successful project.

♦ Landowners that wish to engage community organisations should develop clear policies to support this approach at an early stage. These should encourage staff to take a flexible and entrepreneurial approach to delivering shared public value.
Leadership

The case studies highlighted particular issues in relation to one type of approach, where an entrepreneurial member of staff within the landowning organisation is driving the shared management of the asset.

We might call this an “intrapreneur-driven” approach.

However there are at least two other ways in which shared management arrangements arise. These are set out below. In all three instances similar issues are likely to arise for those individuals who are taking the intermediary position.

Landowner driven

Broadclyst Community Farm is an example of this approach, where the landowner decides to present an opportunity for community management of an asset to local people. In these cases, the intermediary position is likely to be taken by the local land manager. Whether responding to a local opportunity or delivering a wider organisational policy, they are likely to run into issues where they are mediating between their own organisation and the community or community enterprise.

Community driven

In many cases, shared management arrangements arise following an approach from the community. In some cases this may be collaborative from the outset whilst in others it may be more combative, e.g. where the community has campaigned for a change of use or struggled to have their views heard. In these cases, the intermediary position is likely to be taken by a member of the community who may move from a position of opposition or campaigning to one of mediation and negotiation.

In all of these cases, the individual or individuals involved can face great personal stresses as they move between being an “insider” and an “outsider” within their own organisation or community. It may also require a change in role, e.g. from low or middle ranking official in a large organisation to director or chief executive of a new organisation, or from campaigner and antagonist to negotiator and partner. This is a very specific leadership role that requires particular skills and attitudes, and a high degree of personal resilience, if it is to be undertaken successfully.

♦ In any shared management approach the leadership role of the intermediary, and the specific stresses and pressures of the role, should be recognised and supported.
The Case Studies
Broadclyst Community Farm

Organisation

Broadclyst Community Farm was established in 2010 as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) to grow affordable food for the community. It provides an educational and learning resource based around sustainable farming and land stewardship whilst benefiting the wildlife and environment surrounding the farm. It currently has fifteen members and a board of eight people.

The IPS structure was chosen to enable the organisation to trade, have members who buy shares to provide working capital but have charitable objectives that enable it to get funding from trusts and foundations. One share costs £20 and any individual can buy up to one thousand shares.

Site

Broadclyst is a 13 hectare (32 acre) farm about 6 miles north east of Exeter in Devon. It is largely made up of flat, grade 1 or grade 2 arable land. It sits on the edge of the village next to Broadclyst Community College. Cranbrook, a new town of six thousand houses, and a new science park, are being developed nearby.

The site benefits from two good quality farm buildings, one storage shed and one livestock shed. Since taking on the site the group have also installed a poly-tunnel and a borehole for irrigation water.

Ownership

The site is owned by the National Trust and forms part of the Killerton estate. The 2,600 hectare (6,500 acre) estate is centred around the eighteenth century Killerton House. It contains twenty farms as well as 250 cottages and houses, a post office, pubs and commercial properties. The Trust’s main visitor business is centred around the mansion, stables and park. It has owned the property since the 1940s.

History

The National Trust at Killerton had started looking in the early 2000s at how it could combine farming objectives with conservation objectives to provide sustainable land management. In order to try and sustain family farms whilst improving soil, water and environmental management, it started to look at each individual farm in order to understand its risks and special features.

In 2009, Heathfield Farm came back into the Trust’s direct management. At that point it was a 20 hectare (50 acre) farm with a farmhouse and small collection of buildings. The Trust was undertaking a national “Eat Into Green Living” project supported by Defra’s “Greener Living Fund.” The project sought to engage people to help them make the link between individual food choices and the impact on sustainability and the environment. The Trust decided to take the opportunity presented by this small farm to explore the idea of community supported agriculture and community farms.
Negotiation

Following discussions with the Parish Council, the National Trust established a small steering group that included National Trust staff and Parish Councillors.

With advice and support from Stroud Community Agriculture the steering group called a public meeting in early 2010. The meeting attracted over one hundred people. A follow up meeting resulted in the development of a number of different workstreams and the formation of a revised steering group to take the work forward. This steering group evolved into the IPS that has taken on the lease for the farm.

There was significant debate about what would and would not be included in the lease: all or part of the land, the house, buildings etc. In the end the Trust agreed to lease all of the land immediately surrounding the farmhouse. The off-lying land was leased elsewhere whilst the Trust retained the farmhouse and let this separately.

The lease is modelled on a farm business tenancy. It has a period of ten years with a review and break point at five years. The land is scheduled as permanent pasture or arable. An initial planting schedule was agreed as well as the restoration of historic features such as creating nine to ten fields from the existing three, improving hedgerow management and the creation of wet areas.

The management plan for the farm was developed with the group as it set itself up as an IPS. The group’s objectives are therefore reflected in the lease and management agreement.

The National Trust is able to roll the tenancy forward by five years every five years; the group should therefore always have ten years to plan ahead.

Current activities

Broadclyst Community Farm provides sustainable farming whilst providing social, environmental, health, educational and economic benefits. The main focus of the farm is currently on horticultural activities. The grazing land is sublet. However it is possible that Broadclyst may keep its own livestock in the future.

The farm is open to the public every Saturday throughout the year and every Thursday evening during the summer. At these times anyone can come and participate in the planting, tending and harvesting of crops. Educational activities are provided for local school children and horticultural students, whilst groups of conservation volunteers also undertake regular work improving hedgerows, planting trees and improving wildlife habitats on the site. Supervised activities are also provided for people on probation and undertaking community service.

The farm provides food to the National Trust café at Killerton House as well as selling direct to local people and volunteers.
**Finances**

The National Trust made an initial investment in the site, in particular creating a new access road, improving infrastructure such as fencing and drilling a new borehole.

The rent charged by the National Trust increases from £500/year to a more commercial rate of £1,500/year over the first three years.

The farm has benefitted from a small “Awards for All” grant for equipment. In addition to income from the sales of fruit and vegetables it also receives rent from the subletting of grazing land and a small Entry Level Stewardship grant from Natural England.

The farm’s turnover in its first year was about £7,000, dropping to £2,000 in its second year when it no longer had its own livestock. It has made operating losses of £3-400/year, however its ambition is to have a turnover in the region of £30,000 from the sale of livestock, fruit, vegetables and eggs.

The main costs associated with the operation are rent, insurances, seeds and cultivation costs, trees for orchards, electricity and water bills.

**Day-to-day management**

Whilst the day-to-day management is devolved to the management group of Broadclyst Community Farm there is significant regular interaction between the Trust and the farm. All work on the farm is also being undertaken in conformity with an agreed management plan.

An annual formal meeting is held between the management group and the Trust annually. The farm is required to share its business plans, cashflows and budgets for the first five years of its tenancy.
Ambitions

In five years’ time the farm aims to be employing one full time staff member, providing training, and growing and selling fresh, affordable fruit and vegetables.

It aims to be open to the public on a regular basis and develop an area where people could get involved in cultivating crops on an occasional basis for an hour or two. It is exploring how to increase the connection between the farm and its customers such as introducing a community supported agriculture scheme through which people could buy a share of the farm’s harvest.

“We are keen to deliver a tangible benefit to the local community rather than just a feel-good factor.”

Landowner’s perspective

The availability of the site, its location, the National Trust’s desire to improve the quality of the soil and the landscape, and the funding and impetus from the “Eat Into Green Living” project combined to enable the establishment of a community farm.

The Trust had no experience of community farming and was unsure how best to engage with the local community. It therefore drew on the experience of Stroud Community Agriculture who have particular expertise in community supported agriculture and who helped to facilitate the initial community meetings.

It was important for the Trust to be clear about what it could offer and to identify any non-negotiables. The management plan will ensure that the Trust’s objectives to restore historic features, improve hedgerow management, create wet areas and increase community involvement are met.

“Delivering the wider social benefits has contributed to the National Trust’s objectives of working for the benefit of the nation.”

You can watch a short film of Broadclyst Community Farm here: www.vimeo.com/sharedassets/broadclyst
Chiltern Rangers

Organisation

Chiltern Rangers is a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee. It has been established as a local authority spin-out by two staff from the Woodland Service at Wycombe District Council. It was founded in December 2012 and commenced trading in September 2013. The CIC has two staff, who are also executive Directors, and two non-executive Directors. This interim Board will manage the company and recruit additional members over the course of the first twenty-four months. The CIC structure enables the founders to retain a high level of control over the company as it develops compared with other legal forms. Chiltern Rangers will invest 50% of any operating profits into local charities.

Sites

Chiltern Rangers manages fourteen sites in the urban area of High Wycombe, all within two to three miles of the town centre. The sites vary in size from 3 hectares (8 acres) to 16 hectares (40 acres) and consist of mixed woodland, scrub and chalk grassland. Depending on soil types and previous management, they are either pure beech and yew woodland or mixed woodland in which ash tends to dominate. One site is a small wetland of about 1.6 hectares (4 acres). There are two local nature reserves and eight local wildlife sites. All the sites are publically accessible and until recently were managed by the Council’s Woodland Service.

Ownership

Wycombe District Council owns thirteen of the sites, and one is leased by the Council from a local landowner. Chiltern Rangers are also leasing a Council owned depot as part of the contract.

History

In 2011 Wycombe District Council undertook a major service review that included the Woodland Service. It identified a range of options for the future of the Council owned woodlands. These included continuing to manage them in-house, including them in a commercial grounds maintenance contract, or selling them off.

The Council wished to retain ownership of the woodlands in order to retain the environmental, amenity and social benefits they provide. It was also concerned that including them in a commercial maintenance contract would mean that it would lose the links to the community and the volunteering activity that had been developed by the Woodland Service team. It therefore discussed the options with the team and proposed the idea of establishing a staff mutual, utilising support available from the Government’s Mutual Support Programme.

Twenty-one woodlands were included in the original service review. In addition to the fourteen being leased to Chiltern Rangers three were transferred on a ninety-nine year lease to a local conservation charity and four were included in the grounds maintenance contract.
Negotiation

Once the proposed approach had been approved a project team was established inside the Council. The team sought funding and support from the Cabinet Office’s Mutual Support Programme to provide business skills training for the Woodland Service staff and to help them develop a business plan for the CIC.

Each site has its own management plan. This sets out the work that will be undertaken in order to ensure the woodland is maintained and improved. The plans cover woodland management, biodiversity, access, amenity value, health and safety and risk management.

The contract between the Council and Chiltern Rangers is based on a set of method statements. These set out how the work will be undertaken and are linked to the funding agreement.

The Woodland Service staff were responsible for the development of the management plans and method statements and therefore had a substantial degree of input and control regarding their content.

The Council legal team then drew up the contract based on the method statements and this was negotiated and agreed between the legal teams of the Council and the new CIC.

The process of negotiating the spin-out and the contract between the Council and CIC took about twelve months.

The contract is for five years and whilst treated as a contract, the fee will be paid as a grant. At the end of the five years the contract will be put out to competitive tender and will be treated as a fully commercial transaction.

This is believed to be the first local authority spin-out outside of the health sector.
Current activities

As well as day-to-day woodland management activities Chiltern Rangers provide training opportunities for young people who are not in education or employment. They are planning to develop apprenticeships, internships and an expanded work experience programme, as well as multifaceted educational packages for schools. They also provide volunteering and team building activities for private companies.

Finances

The contract with Wycombe District Council is worth £157,000 in the first year. This equates to about 80% of the estimated annual costs of the organisation, which are about £200,000 per year. These include salaries, insurance, IT, professional services and other general running costs of the business.

The additional 20% will be met from earned income delivering a range of services to schools, businesses and other landowners. Additional income will be available in the form of grants, e.g. Woodland Management and Woodland Improvement Grants available from the Forestry Commission.

The income from the contract drops to about 60% of the operating costs by year five, so the proportion of the income from other commercial or grant funded operations will need to rise accordingly.

Day-to-day management

Day-to-day management of the sites is devolved to Chiltern Rangers within the terms of the management plans and method statements agreed with the Council. The CIC will engage directly with a Client Liaison Officer and will provide quarterly and annual reports during the five-year life of the initial contract.

Ambitions

Chiltern Rangers’ ambition is that in five years’ time the sites are all better habitats for wildlife and better places for people to enjoy, and that the organisation is starting to expand.

In the longer term Chiltern Rangers would like to see the same model applied to other woodland areas that are close to centres of population.

“We need to do more than create wonderful isolated nature reserves and high quality conservation areas. We also need to manage the small pockets of land that link these up much better. Conservation organisations only have the resources to manage their own sites. Organisations like ours can help to link these up by managing the spaces in between them.”
Landowner's perspective

Wycombe District Council is responding to the cuts in local authority budgets by undertaking “whole service reviews” to look at how local services can be delivered differently rather than simply cut. This includes transferring assets such as community centres to community ownership, contracting out and retendering services, and considering spinning services out by establishing staff mutuals.

By supporting the existing staff to spin-out as a new independent CIC, the Council has been able to retain the existing level of service whilst reducing its costs. The costs in the first year are lower than would have been spent by delivering the service in house and will reduce further during the life of the contract.

Through the agreement of detailed method statements and management plans the Council is able to devolve its responsibilities for the oversight of its woodland whilst maintaining public access and improving the quality of the local environment. In doing so it is delivering on three of its four strategic objectives: environmental sustainability, value for money and community engagement.

“If we hadn’t done this the staff would be in the grounds maintenance contract and the team would be doing that work – litter picking and tidying paths. We’ve managed to retain a small team that are passionate and will be continuing to engage with the community and are in control of their own destiny.”

You can watch a short film of Chiltern Rangers CIC here: www.vimeo.com/sharedassets/chilternrangers
Neroche Woodlanders

Organisation

Neroche Woodlanders Ltd. is an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) established for the benefit of the community. It was founded in early 2013.

The organisation has four founding Directors. It is intending to open the organisation to members and to issue community shares as it develops.

Site

Young Wood is a 40 hectare (100 acre) mixed forest consisting of some plantation and some ancient woodland. It sits within Neroche Forest (1,000 hectares/2,500 acres) that runs across the northern half of the Blackdown Hills in Somerset. The site is accessible and level and situated about 2 miles south of Taunton. The Blackdown Hills is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Ownership

Young Wood is owned by the Crown Estate and managed by the Forestry Commission on a ninety-nine year lease.

History

Neroche Woodlanders and the proposal to manage Young Wood on a social enterprise basis arose from the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme. The scheme, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (with match funding from the project partners) ran from 2006-2011. It consisted of twenty-three separate projects that sought to invest in the natural, built and cultural heritage of the area, make the landscape more accessible and improve local people’s ability to sustain the quality of the landscape.

The Forestry Commission employed a Project Manager for the scheme which brought together a wide range of partners including Natural England, the local councils, Somerset Wildlife Trust and the National Trust.

A stakeholder group of local landowners, residents and users was established in 2005 to help design the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The stakeholder group remained involved throughout the life of the scheme, eventually going on to form the Blackdown Hills Trust, a charity that acts as an enabling organisation, accessing funds that other project partners cannot. The Trust has enabled the founding Directors of Neroche Woodlanders to undertake the establishment work at Young Wood that led to the founding of the new social enterprise. The Blackdown Trust is made up of members of the community who have never been employed in the projects. The Neroche Woodlanders’ directors are all practitioners who have been employed in different capacities as part of the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme.
“It’s complicated, as always with these structures there are lots of different strands and they all have different historical roots. That’s because it’s real.”

Negotiation

The proposal to develop a social enterprise and lease part of the forest to it was developed by the scheme’s Project Manager who has become one of the founding directors of the enterprise. He had support from the Forestry Commission Regional Development Manager. The proposal also received advice from the Policy Team in Forestry Commission England.

The idea therefore secured support within the Commission. However this coincided with the public outcry at the Coalition Government’s proposals to sell off parts of the public forest estate. The government withdrew its proposals and established the Independent Panel on Forestry, during which time the Forestry Commission was unable to make commitments related to changing the way it managed its forests.

This coincided with the spending review and an internal restructure of Forest Enterprises within the Forestry Commission. The proposal had to be put to, and agreed by, a new management team. It was decided that the proposal would need approval of the Forest Enterprise England Management Board.

Organisational change and political turbulence increased the time taken for a decision to be made.

“That was a constraint and an opportunity. It made everyone a bit more risk averse but the idea of more public involvement in the forest estate became higher profile, which was advantageous on balance.”
The scheme’s Project Manager became a founding Director of the new social enterprise and will lead its forestry work in Young Wood when his contract with the Forestry Commission comes to an end. The constraints of the Forestry Act preclude the Forestry Commission in England from delegating its responsibility for managing the woodland to third parties. It is therefore unable to provide a full lease to Neroche Woodlanders. Instead, a management agreement is being negotiated, based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the Forestry Commission and Neroche Woodlanders, comprising a buildings lease, a long term permit for activities, and a standing sale contract for forestry works.

Current activities

At the moment there are monthly volunteer days with an average of twenty people on site. Volunteers are drawn from the local community and from further afield. School groups visit the site regularly, some through direct arrangements and others through the Local Learning Partnership. A long term project called “Wild Learning” is being undertaken with adults from deprived communities in Taunton, funded from the local authority’s adult learning budget. The site is also open for regular family days.

Finances

As a social enterprise, Neroche Woodlanders will raise an income from its activities (sale of woodland products, training services and social programmes) and will use that income to cover its costs and to reinvest in its work. At this stage, with the management agreement still not finalised, the finances of the new organisation remain uncertain. The business plan suggests that the cycle of forestry management will deliver some income in the second year, however this is dependent on possible future contracts. A community share issue is being considered in order to provide the new company with some initial working capital.

The business model relies on several activities; each of which will deliver a small income, but none of which is lucrative enough to cover the full costs of the operation on its own. The first couple of years are likely to be “hand to mouth” with nobody involved drawing a full income.

Day-to-day management

In addition to the management agreement, which will establish the permission for Neroche Woodlanders to operate within the wood, a management plan will also be agreed between Neroche Woodlanders and the Forestry Commission. The management plan will outline the short and medium term objectives for the management of the woodland, as well as the range of activities and day-to-day operational procedures that will be undertaken.
Ambitions

In five years’ time the Neroche Woodlanders aim to be a financially sustainable business delivering a better managed woodland and engaging more people in its management in ways that enable them to benefit both personally and collectively. Neroche Woodlanders aspire to be a partner with the Forestry Commission during a period of change, and for both parties to view themselves as positive collaborators.

Landowner’s perspective

Neroche Woodlanders has arisen from the landscape partnership project that brought a wider public engagement to the forest. The establishment of a social enterprise allows this work to be built on in order to increase use of the site for education and social learning activities without increasing costs to the Forestry Commission. It increases the intensity of the beneficial use of a public asset in ways that the Forestry Commission does not have the staff resources to do itself.

“They bring a set of expertise that we can’t match locally. Local knowledge, local enthusiasm and local affinity with these woodlands which is hard for us to replicate.”

There are no direct cost savings to the Forestry Commission as local operational staff will still be required to supervise and monitor the work being undertaken by Neroche Woodlanders. The peppercorn rent may preclude the opportunity for potential future commercial uses and there may be some loss of potential revenue associated with timber harvesting.

Increased access to the woodland is very important to the Forestry Commission, for whom the woodlands are a public asset, delivering benefits through public access, education and ecosystem services.

You can watch a short film of Neroche Woodlanders here: www.vimeo.com/sharedassets/neroche
East Reservoir Community Garden

Organisation

London Wildlife Trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It was established in 1973 and is part of a national network of independent local Wildlife Trusts. It has forty full time and twenty-five part time staff as well as about thirty freelance and sessional workers. It relies heavily on volunteers to maintain the network of over forty nature reserves it manages across London. The Trust aims to protect wildlife in London for future generations.

Site

East Reservoir Community Garden is a 1.5 hectare (3 acre) site on the bank of East Reservoir, one of two reservoirs constructed in the 1830s in Stoke Newington in the London Borough of Hackney. It provides drinking water as well as a valuable habitat for bird and amphibian species. The site is the largest water body in the Borough, and a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. It is fed by the New River that runs to the west of the site. Hackney is the second most deprived local authority area in England and the area is undergoing significant redevelopment and regeneration.

Ownership

The 6 hectare (17 acre) East Reservoir site, the Community Garden and the classroom and office building that occupy it are owned by Thames Water. The West Reservoir is owned by Hackney Council and is used for leisure and recreation purposes.

History

London Wildlife Trust has a longstanding relationship with Thames Water dating back thirty years and operating under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Trust helps Thames Water to meet its corporate social responsibility goals by delivering education, community engagement, improved biodiversity and messages about water safety and water conservation.

Negotiation

Until 2007, London Wildlife Trust occupied offices at the West Reservoir Centre. When Thames Water needed to undertake engineering works at the site it donated the site that is now East Reservoir Community Garden to the Trust as compensation.

The Trust occupies the site and building under the terms of a thirty-year lease. It is responsible for the garden and for the upkeep of the building and facilities. It also has an agreement that provides it with direct access to the East Reservoir. There is no fee associated with the lease.

7 English Indices of Deprivation 2010
The lease gives the Wildlife Trust freedom to manage the garden and building as it wishes in order to improve the quality and biodiversity of the site. It is unable to actively manage the land associated with the reservoir due to Thames Water’s operational requirements.

**Current activities**

The site mainly acts as an educational facility. The practical volunteer work undertaken on site is focussed on creating mini-habitats that can demonstrate a range of environments and biodiversity to children and adults who visit for educational purposes. It also enables the Trust to demonstrate its objectives in a practical way.

In addition to the activities that take place on the site, having a physical base in the area enables the Trust to secure funding in order to deliver other projects and programs off site. Major projects it is currently involved in include:

- **Manor House PACT (Big Lottery Communities Living Sustainably Fund)**
  A partnership project engaging with sixty thousand people by providing training, enabling them to become more aware of their environment and lead environmental projects in the future. The project is a partnership between London Wildlife Trust, Manor House Development Trust, Groundwork, LSX, and Transition South Finsbury Park;

- **Wild London Inclusive London (Big Lottery Access to Nature Fund)**
  A project engaging twenty thousand people to find out what available green space they have locally and supporting them to lead projects to improve it.
Finances

The cost of running the East Reservoir site is approximately £250,000/year which covers operational costs and the salaries of four members of staff.

Income is approximately 50:50 from grants and from corporate sponsorship. Schools who come to the site for educational visits do pay a fee, but this does not cover the full cost of the service provided. Whilst some government funding is available to deliver environmental engagement work, this has declined in recent years.

Day-to-day management

Day-to-day management of the East Reservoir site is entirely devolved to London Wildlife Trust. There is no monitoring or reporting associated with the lease.

Ambitions

The Trust, working in partnership with Thames Water, Hackney Council, Natural England and local housing developers has secured an £84,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop proposals to improve access and biodiversity of both the East and West reservoirs. The plans include the restoration of a listed Gas House for use as a community hub, the creation of a bridge over the New River, improvements to paths and the installation of a floating boardwalk. The project will also ensure a continued lease on the current site and permanent access to the reservoirs.

The initial relationship with Thames Water has developed due to the recognition of the good work done at East Reservoir and at other sites across London. London Wildlife Trust is also working with the Walthamstow Wetlands Partnership, led by Thames Water and Waltham Forest Council, on the Walthamstow Wetlands project. The £6.5m project will open up the largest purpose-built water body in London, owned by Thames Water, to the public. Proposals include a new visitor centre, play area, café, walkways, and landscape and biodiversity improvements.

“You have to be visionary. You have to have an idea that makes sense to a lot of people. It has to resonate. If you think of an idea and it doesn’t resonate you have to be ready to drop it in a minute because it won’t work.”

You can watch a short film of East Reservoir Community Garden here: www.vimeo.com/sharedassets/eastreservoir
About this research

This research was carried out between February and June 2013.

Telephone or face-to-face semi-structured interviews were undertaken with:

- David Jenkins (National Trust)
- David Mooney (London Wildlife Trust)
- Sarah Randall (Wycombe District Council)
- Gavin Saunders (Neroche Woodlanders)
- John Shaw (Chiltern Rangers CIC)
- Jonathan Smye (Broadclyst Community Farm)
- Kevin Stannard (Forestry Commission)

Mark Walton undertook the research as part of his fellowship with the Clore Social Leadership Programme. He is Executive Director and co-founder of the social enterprise Shared Assets Ltd.

Clore Social Leadership Programme identifies the UK’s most promising social leaders and gives them gold-standard training, skills and opportunities. During the highly individualised Fellowship programme Fellows attend residential courses, experience coaching and mentoring, undertake an extended secondment and practice-based research project, as well as engaging in Action Learning.

Shared Assets support the development of social enterprise and community management of environmental assets such as woodlands, waterways, coastal areas and parks. They aim to reconnect local communities with their natural resources and facilitate new collaborative relationships between landowners and communities, based on principles of productivity, replenishment and enterprise.

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