

MEASURING SYNERGIES AND TENSIONS IN THE USE OF COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

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Community woodlands can be defined as “areas of trees with free public access close to a significant population centre”. They are therefore of interest to a range of people and organisations such as the owners of the woodland, local residents, local conservation groups, and government. This presentation will address three questions:

- What services, provided by community woodlands, are valued by these groups?
- What relative value do these groups place on these services?
- What are the similarities and tensions?

The research was undertaken using a descriptive case study (Agbenyega, 2007). A poplar wood (Pegnut Wood), and two mixed-broadleaf woodlands (Clapham Park Wood and Reynolds Wood), all planted in Bedfordshire between 1993 and 1998 provided the case studies. The functions and uses of community woodlands were examined using De Groot’s framework of ecosystem functions and uses (De Groot et al. 2002). Initial semi-structured pilot interviews were undertaken to identify the possible functions and uses. After this a self-administered structure questionnaire was completed by 84 local residents, the three woodland owners, two local conservation groups, and three representatives from government departments and agencies.

Each respondent group recognised the “regulating”, “habitat”, “provisioning” and “information” functions of community woodlands. In addition most respondents recognised that community woodlands may have “negative” effects, and it was helpful to include this in the analysis. The different groups generally gave similar relative valuations to the five functions, indicating that there is substantial scope for such groups to work together. However there were also differences: the group placing the greatest value to the “regulation” function was the Council Council (owner of one of the sites). The greatest weightings for the “habitat”, “provisioning” and “information” functions were identified by the conservation trust owner, the private owner, and government agencies respectively. The private owner also placed the greatest weighting on “negative” functions.

Each respondent was also asked to identify specific uses arising from the functions. Across the three sites, local respondents placed the greatest relative value on the use of woodlands in providing a habitat for wild plants and animals (14%) and landscape beauty (12%). The private woodland owner placed a higher value on the use of the woodland for timber (14%) than other groups (1-5%). Each group allocated between 10 and 20% of the overall

value of the woodland to providing regulating services showing the potential importance of this function.

References

Agbenyega, O. (2007). Application of the Ecosystem Function Framework to Community Woodlands. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Cranfield, Bedfordshire: Cranfield University. 288 pp.

De Groot, R.S., Wilson, M.A. and Boumans, R.M.J. (2002). A typology for the classification, description and valuation of ecosystem functions, goods and services. *Ecological Economics* 41: 393-408.