

Woods Report

November 2022

Key outcome:

- Maintain the all-access pathways through the woods and improve drainage

Last quarter

A quote of £3,226 (+VAT) was received from A.M. Daggs for path repairs in Fawn Wood, against an estimate of £3,000. On this basis, the work should be cost neutral after timber sales. We have accepted this quotation and asked Daggs to proceed but we have yet to hear back from them with a start date. Daggs have yet to submit costs to install water bars across the path in Speedy Wood. These costs will need to be approved, but it would make sense if they are installed at the same time as the other work is being carried out.

The horse logger completed the removal of the logs from Fawn Wood to Station Yard, following the 5% thin. Two public demonstrations were held to allow people to view this traditional woodland management skill. There are around 4 loads of logs to be removed (c.100 tons). They will be removed over a number of different dates. We plan to sell the chip locally.

Lothian Conservation Volunteers cleared the last ditch on 14th August and will now be focusing on rhododendron clearance.

Plans

A partial closure of the path will be required while work is carried out to remove trees affected by ash dieback. There are two compartments in Speedy Wood with high concentrations of ash trees. As the majority of these trees are now affected by ash dieback, the two areas will be clear-felled and then replanted

with native trees. The work had been due to start at the end of October, but has been delayed. The path will need to be closed for 1 month from the 1st bridge (after the welcome sign), round to the top exit which leads onto the Broadwoodside Road. The path will be re-dressed following completion of the work.

Key outcome:

- Manage the woodland to make the forest more resilient, including wildlife surveys and pond creation
- Ensure the safety of the woodland by removing hazardous trees

Last quarter

The safety ring was installed at the wildlife pond.

Our most recent tree safety survey revealed that most of our ash trees are now suffering from ash dieback. Previous forestry advice was to wait and see if trees develop resilience. However that advice has now changed and action is now required to remove these trees. If left, the trees become very brittle and dangerous to work on. There are 2 compartments in Speedy Wood with high concentrations of ash trees. Both of these compartments will be clear-felled and replanted with native trees such as alder and aspen, as well as birch, which is very fast-growing, and possibly black poplar. Ash trees will be left in other parts of the woodland (away from the path network and houses) and may develop resilience. The woodland management plan has been updated and a special community meeting was held on 21st September to inform the community about the plans. The meeting included a question and answer session and the notes from the meeting have been published in a newsletter which has been delivered to all households in the village. The forestry application for the felling has been

submitted. It is currently estimated that felling work will take place in March 2023. The felling should be completed in 1 week.

Plans

The cost of the ash dieback management plan, including replanting and tree protectors, needs to be quantified. Approximately 224 trees will be replanted (80 alder, 80 birch, 32 aspen and 32 black poplar). The remaining replacement trees will come from natural regeneration. The plan is to use older whips to allow for faster regeneration. Older whips will emerge from the tree guards more quickly, hopefully within a year. Although the guards will need to be retained until the trees are 3m high.

Meanwhile in Fawn Wood, work will be required to restock the northern area with mixed age pine seedlings and saplings to establish a 'buffer' of young trees to protect the older trees exposed to wind after the last storm. All new plantings will need deer protection. Individual trees will need stakes and guards, but for areas such as the north of Fawn Wood it may be appropriate to consider putting up temporary deer fencing rather than protect individual trees.

Key outcome:

- Eradicate rhododendrons from the woods

Progress

Lothian Conservation Volunteers were onsite on 11th September, 30th October and 13th November to clear rhododendron and a further day is scheduled for 26th November. LCV will also continue to visit the woods on Wednesdays. All cuttings are getting burnt or chipped as the rhododendron is cleared, minimising new debris piles.

Plans

As part of the ash dieback management plan, the existing piles of cleared rhododendron will be collected up after the trees are felled and burnt, along with ash tree crowns.

Key outcomes: run volunteer days for skills development and social opportunities

Progress

11 volunteers helped with weekly Forest School sessions with Yester P2. One of our volunteers is now on a waiting list for a funded place to do Forest School training at Newbattle Abbey College in March 2023.

8 volunteers, including 2 young adults, helped to run the activities during the Wooden Anniversary Community celebration on 28th August.

2 volunteers assisted LCV with ditch clearing on 11th September and a further 5 volunteers helped on the 30th October.

1 of our volunteers has completed a 2-day Outdoor First Aid training course to allow her to host volunteer days. This will allow us to increase the number of in-woods volunteer days.

Plans

Winter volunteer days will be arranged once the schedule for the ash clearance is confirmed.

There will be an xmas decoration event on 9th December which volunteers will help to run. Following last year's successful event, volunteer Paul will make decorations using offcuts of cleared rhododendron, which will be available to buy on a donation basis. Further volunteers will help to run the event.

The woods will develop a plan for external volunteer training to ensure that our budget is spent fairly and in line with woodland priorities. The HLF training

budget is £4,320. Training needs will be assessed and a process will be developed to promote training options within the community. Consideration will be given to ways of helping the woods get an appropriate return on the training investment. Roger and Nev have compiled a spreadsheet, showing training options/requirements for each volunteer role, together with the number of volunteers and the training cost for each course.

There will be a forest school volunteers' meeting before the end of the year to gather feedback and discuss future plans.

Key outcome: develop youth group events shaped by young people for skills learning supported by training providers

Progress

The AGM event included skills development for children and young adults, including charcoal art tuition, forest school activities and forest church activities.

The cubs met weekly in the woods through to the start of October. Cubs are hoping to complete their Environmental Protection badge and are talking through options with Nev, which might include tree planting and rhododendron clearance.

A family-friendly Bat Walk was held on 29th September, with 2 children attending.

Plans

Venturing Out have scheduled ASN sessions on 13th November, 18th November, 27th November, 2nd December and 11th December.

Nev is continuing to talk to outdoor education providers, but we've not yet been able to find a provider with spare capacity.

We are likely to run further bushcraft sessions in the Spring and we will aim to have an outdoor cinema event in April or September, which will include something for the youth age group.

Following the success of this year's pilot summer camp, we will be considering options for camps at Easter and Summer 2023. We will need to gauge leader and volunteer availability, and we will need to determine a charging model and a system for allocating spaces.

We will be looking at holding a Family volunteer day to tie in with the ash dieback replanting.

Scotland's Rural College have booked a visit for March 2023 and hope to take part in a volunteering session as part of a Community Project Management module.

Key outcome: offer school and nursery trips to enable children to learn about natural heritage and how to care for it

Progress

A group of 12 Yester P2 children enjoyed 6 Forest School sessions. Feedback from the school and from parents has been very positive. As it's a large class, the children have been divided into 2 groups of 12. The 2nd group will have their sessions after the February break. Yester P7 enjoyed 2 sessions in the woods working on map navigation. Yester P1 had a session with Nev on Wednesday 9th November and P4 arranged a visit to do tree identification.. Liz has offered to do a number of one-off Forest School sessions before the end of the year.

Plans

The next block of Forest School sessions for P2 will take place after the February break. Nev will continue to explore other outdoor learning opportunities and Yester Primary School will continue to arrange sessions in line with curriculum topics. Roo will meet with Yester Head Teacher, Mrs Mercer, to agree future plans.

Nev will write a 'wish list' of equipment that would ensure the future sustainability of the forest school sessions. This would remove the need to borrow materials (eg we are currently using the cubs' chemical toilet).

Key outcome: provide events for local community groups to benefit from the woodland, increase wellbeing and enjoyment

Key outcome: develop adult learning events to increase skills and knowledge that will help us care for our woods

Progress

The wooden anniversary event was successfully held on 28th August. Excluding trustees, around 60 members of the community enjoyed the activities on offer, including forest school, forest church, charcoal art and foraging walks. The event brought together a number of different community groups, including members of the Gifford Art Group, Yester Church and the Lothian Conservation Volunteers. We used funding to engage the services of a Forest School Leader, a Charcoal Art tutor and Buck & Birch. We were also supported by 8 volunteers. The event incorporated the AGM, which around 40 members of the community attended.

Other events this quarter included a fungi foray for 20 people, a free bat walk for 9 people and 2 horse logging demos which 20 people attended.

For Local Community Groups, Nev led a fungi foray for 14 members of the Gifford Horticultural Society and hosted a meeting of 23 members of the Native Woodland Discussion Group.

We have also been pleased to assist with two practical academic research projects. We received confirmation in September that the iron-age oak planks produced by Hamish Darrah in the woods have now been installed at the reconstructed Roundhouse at the Black Loch of Myrton. Hamish successfully made the planks from a single oak tree via a poorly understood prehistoric woodworking technique known as tangentially splitting. Also in September a team from St Andrews University took samples from 25 pine trees as part of comparative oak/pine research project, which has 2 main elements: (i)

calculating which of the tree species is sequestering the most carbon through the life of the trees; and (ii) model how climate controls tree growth and assess how these trees may “behave” in the coming decades.

Plans

There will be a Xmas decoration community event on the 9th of December. Volunteer Paul will make a range of decorations, using offcuts of rhododendron and other cleared material, and these will be available for people to customise and buy by donation.

The poetry group hopes to re-launch in Spring.

There will be a review of adult learning events so far before planning any more. Several recent events have been planned in response to community feedback. However, in some cases the take up has been very low.

Mark Williams of Galloway Wildfoods (who led a foraging event in Spring) has suggested that the woodlands would be a good venue for an accessibility foray.

A Lunch Club visit might be arranged next year.

Key outcome: to ensure the sustainability of Gifford Community Woodland for future generations and find ongoing ways to cover the costs of woodland management and community engagement activities

Progress

Looking back over the past couple of quarters, events which have generated significant revenue are: Nev's fungi foray (£565), Birch Tapping (£340), Foraging Walk (£1,000), providing the teas at the Gifford Flower Show (£600), running the stall at the Church Fete (£300) and the Xmas Decorations event (£500), providing a guideline potential annual events revenue of c.£3,300.

The Co-op Community Fund generated £1026.66 and allowed the woods to establish useful connections with other local charities.

We were very grateful to receive a legacy payment of £10,000 in November.

Proof of costs was submitted to enable the next portion of the Fallago Funds to be released. To make this process easier in the future, invoices have been added to the Google drive and will be uploaded on an ongoing basis.

Regarding internal administration, the trustees agreed to amend the constitution to remove the need to rotate a third of trustees each AGM. This will ensure that trustees can serve a full term. A vote was taken at the AGM and the change was approved.

John Wrinn stood down as Trustee at the June AGM, leaving an opening for a new Trustee.

An external evaluation of our reporting systems in relation to the Heritage Lottery Funding is now underway. Mike Nicholson has drafted a feedback form, which was tested on 12 people who attended the fungi foray.

There is now an electronic Friends sign up option.

Plans

Next year's events will need to be confirmed - in conjunction with the review of adult learning events.

We will need to submit a mid-term report to the Heritage Lottery Fund to be able to receive the next 40% of the grant.

AOB

Fruit trees. The fruit trees group held a vote at the AGM to decide on tree varieties. The results will be shared soon. An anonymous donor has given £500 to help with the cost of the fruit trees. The pack of 105 'Wild Harvest' saplings

from the Queens Green Canopy has been delivered and will be planted on 20th November. Key dates/activities for this project are as follows:

- **Sunday 13th November** - site meeting in Station Yard to look at tree locations
- **before 20th November** - neighbours' meeting to be held to review tree locations and decide where to locate water storage container.
- **20th November** - Queen's Green Canopy trees to be planted.
- **14th January 2023** - ground preparation for the fruit trees (which are due to arrive by the end of January).
- **21st January 2023** - we will put in protection for each fruit tree, so we are ready to plant them immediately upon their arrival.
- End-January 2023 - planting!

Disabled parking space. Gifford Community Council have approached ELC to look at opportunities to have a disabled parking space on Tweeddale Avenue. The council has recently replaced the single white line at the junction with double yellow lines.

Buck & Birch proposal - they hope to continue working every sap season (late Feb/March). They usually arrive in the morning and collect by hand, keeping vehicle use to a minimum. They tapped around 50 trees last year with 35 taps and collected around 1,200 litres of sap over 3 weeks. They would happily tap 100 trees at Gifford but are happy with whatever allocation they are allowed. They would also like to continue to plant primroses in the woods. Buck & Birch would pay 50p per litre to the woods, and would also commit to at least one day of education for local residents.

Coppicing proposal - Hamish Darrah has asked permission to start coppicing hazel rods from the woodland between November and December 2022. He would like to supply them to the Scottish Crannog Centre, Loch Tay, which is reconstructing an Iron Age Village, including the construction of woven hazel

roundhouses. The centre is looking for up to 15,000 hazel rods. Hamish has estimated that there are approximately 1,200 suitable rods in the woodland which could be coppiced. One of the main concentrations of hazel is within compartment 8, parallel to Broadwoodside Road. Hamish would aim to use hand tools (billhooks, axes and handsaws) to reduce the disturbance in the woodland. The coppiced material would be stored adjacent to the woodland entrance from Broadwoodside Road.

Appendix 1: Event Feedback

Forest School, Term 1 2022

Thanks to all the volunteers this is the highlight of my daughters week.
Highlight of our daughters too!! Thank you

Bat Walk, September 2022

I'd like to say thank you for last nights bat walk - [we] found it good fun, and really interesting to hear the bats in action. Please pass on my appreciation to Richard and the organisers.

Native Woodland Discussion Group, September 2022

I'd like to add my thanks to others for our excellent day at Gifford CW yesterday with the NWDG. I haven't been back for 5 years and I am so impressed with how the woods have developed and the interesting activities taking place. You are doing a fantastic job. I'm sure there are challenges but the woods feel like they are in safe hands.

And thanks for sharing your knowledge of fungi with us. It's whetted my interest in fungi again. And the gourmet foraged food! ... it was up there as one of the best meals ever! And thanks to Hella and Hamish for their excellent contributions too.

Sorry for all the hyperbole (I'm not usually like this!) but we had a really inspiring day. I'm going to be back a bit sooner this time.

Fungi Foray, September 2022

These [photos of wildfood picnic items] were absolutely delicious. Fascinating, informative and delicious day out!

I think these events are terrific and all the work everyone does with the community woodlands is much appreciated, thank you.

Look forward to coming on another one perhaps next season! We really enjoyed the whole experience!

Yester Primary School P7 visit, August 2022

We had a fantastic day on Monday. I got about an hour's worth of teaching and experience of map navigation just by walking along the path through Speedy Wood. Check out the school's Twitter page if you like to see some photos of our morning - making and aligning giant compasses with logs!

Feedback from Horse Logging Demo August 2022

Please pass on my personal thanks for demonstrating these magnificent animals at work - fantastic

A dying skill. Well done to all connected to Gifford Community Woods.

Fabulous

An absolute joy to see this tonight, feeling privileged! Thank you for sharing Duke and

Queenie with us 

Woodland Foraging April 2022

Thank you so much for this today. Amazing to discover so much flavour on your doorstep... really informative and entertaining - topped by a delicious feast.

Appendix 2: Wishing Tree feedback

It is very peaceful

The wildlife, the bird song, the peacefulness

I visited a place most days in the woods, where I sat to pray for my friend's husband, who is a recovered alcoholic.

Plant native trees that are becoming rare

I would like to have more colour and more flowers. Fish in the pond

More boarhs (boughs) with fruit

See if reconstructing the mountain bike track is feasible. Get the kids involved.

Another family film screening please

Kids holiday clubs or activities