Woods Report

Nov 2024 (Q2 Sept – Nov, Q3 Dec -Feb)

Aim 1: Care for our woods

Outcomes

- Manage the woodland to make the forest more resilient and diverse
- Eradicate rhododendrons from the woods

Activities to achieve this

- Through a mix of volunteer days and project manager time we will invest time in tree planting and weeding, rhododendron clearing and the spraying of regeneration, in addition to other key tasks to keep the woods healthy including lever, mulch and strimming.

Targets/measures of success

- 12 volunteer days held per year
- Biodiversity audits?

Last quarter

There have been no group volunteering days through September and October, but volunteers assisted with the fungi foray in early September and there are two volunteering events planned for November with the Lothian Conservation Volunteers to continue the Rhododendron eradication programme

Newly planted and previously planted trees are currently being strimmed to remove brambles and courser vegetation so that there are clear areas around each tree for chemical weeding in the spring.

Nev has been working through Rhododendron regeneration treating by stem injection and foliar chemical application to prevent any regrowth within cleared areas.

John Wrinn is still working towards his risk assessment training for leading volunteering days

A fungi foray was held on Sunday 8th September. Records from this event and a second foray for Gifford Horticultural Society later in September will be added to the already extensive biodiversity database.

LCV are visiting the woodland regularly on Thursdays, continuing the Rhododendron control and burning debris piles from the eradication process

Plans

We aim to hold a further volunteering day on 8th December and will advertise a new calendar for the New Year shortly.

All volunteer sessions for Rhododendron control will be supported by using the chipper to minimise an increase in debris piles.

John Wrinn, on completion of training may be able to support other volunteer opportunities.

We are still waiting for lists from Dorothy Lyle for moth events and visits from the Edinburgh Natural History Society.

Ben and Alison Averis, respected local ecologists, have agreed to carry out a vascular plant survey and if there is interest from within the community, are happy to lead a walk around the woodland.

A policy regarding introductions to the woodland is ongoing and will be made public in due course

Aim 2: Learn from our woods

Outcomes

- People of all ages in our community better understand and learn how to care for our woodland

Activities to achieve this

- School and nursery trips each term to the woods and blocks of Forest School for P2 children and the nurture group each year. Provide adult learning events e.g. fungi foray in addition to youth events. Ongoing volunteer opportunities will also support this. Activities will be achieved through a mix of external local providers and volunteers with oversight from the Project Manager.

Targets/measures of success

- All P2 children and the nurture group experience a forest school block each year
- 18 school trips each year
- 4 adult learning events
- 4 youth events

Last quarter

Primary 2 have attended regular Friday morning Forest School sessions, the Yester Primary Nurture Group are now attending regular visits on a Tuesday afternoon and a Home Education/Community Group have attended on Tuesday mornings. We had a visit from P6/7 with Mr Devereux in September and Richard Phillips, a community member, led a navigation course for a private school group at the beginning of October.

Venturing Out held 2 events in October for their ASN Family Group.

Buck and Birch held a successful foraging event on 19th October, welcoming 15 new visitors to the woodland and one community member.

Gifford 1st Cubs visited the woodland for one of their evening sessions in October

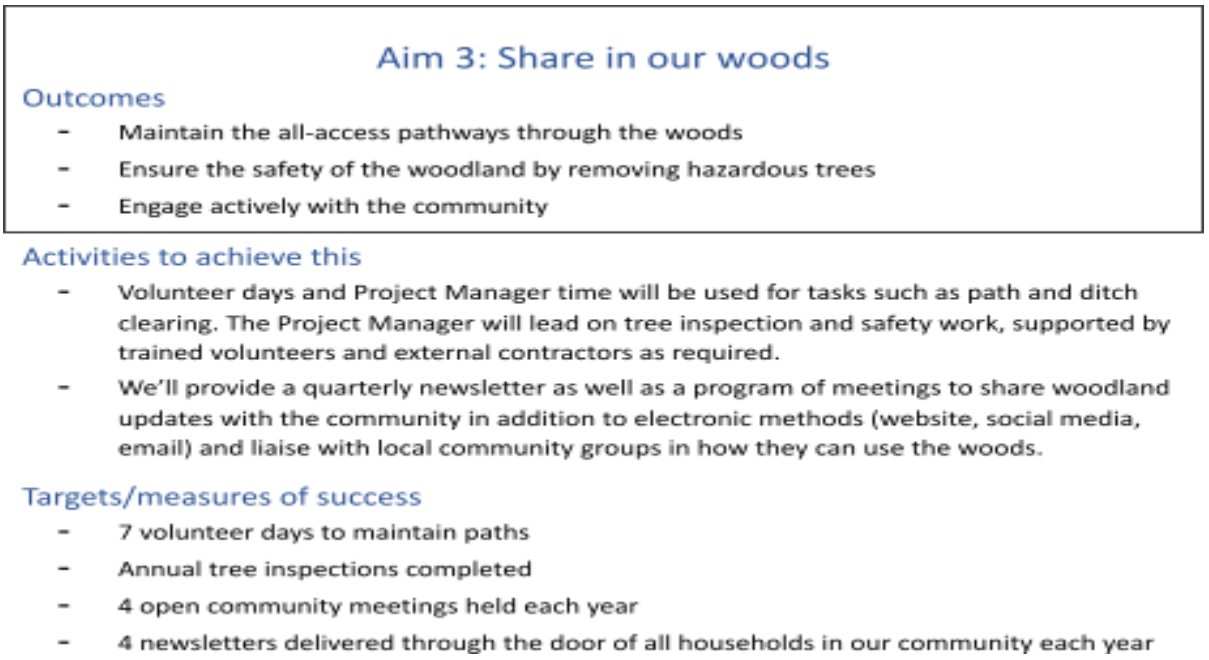
Plans

Forest School sessions will continue for all groups until the end of this term.

The leaders have benefited from assistance by community volunteers, which they now coordinate themselves.

The Forest School providers have set up a Community Interest Company, GetOut Outdoor Learning CIC, and continue to explore other ways to provide forest school experiences for young people out with our programme with Yester Primary.

Venturing Out are planning 3 further visits in November and December



Aim 3: Share in our woods

Outcomes

- Maintain the all-access pathways through the woods
- Ensure the safety of the woodland by removing hazardous trees
- Engage actively with the community

Activities to achieve this

- Volunteer days and Project Manager time will be used for tasks such as path and ditch clearing. The Project Manager will lead on tree inspection and safety work, supported by trained volunteers and external contractors as required.
- We'll provide a quarterly newsletter as well as a program of meetings to share woodland updates with the community in addition to electronic methods (website, social media, email) and liaise with local community groups in how they can use the woods.

Targets/measures of success

- 7 volunteer days to maintain paths
- Annual tree inspections completed
- 4 open community meetings held each year
- 4 newsletters delivered through the door of all households in our community each year

Last quarter

Tree safety work is on-going - two large dying ash trees have been taken down by contractors, Lord of The Trees, who have also felled an elm that had recently begun to succumb to Dutch elm disease, next to the bridge on Station Road with boundaries, buildings and telephone cables in proximity!

A meeting was held in June with John Wrinn, Andrew Riva, and Nev regarding path maintenance. Andrew has kindly offered to carry out digger work to assist with path maintenance to repair recent path damage as well as increasing drainage to mitigate further damage from heavy rain in the future. This will need to be supported by volunteer days as appropriate. He believes he can get access to a digger for free and is hoping to source assistance in haulage of aggregates. Andrew has since let us know that the digger is currently undergoing repairs, and he will notify us as soon as it becomes available. There has been no further progress with these repairs.

Jill Alexander held another Silent walk and Meditation event in September.

The new Woodland Signage is now in place

Plans

Two out of the dozen or so trees likely to be potential bat roosts have not leafed up. All the others have, which allows us an incremental mitigation process as per 'Bats Proposal' document. Nev will take down these two trees with a contractor on 22nd November and commence with other annual tree safety requirements.

Some trees that require attention are within the Conservation Area and the council need to be approached for consultation/approval.

Key decisions required

- Policy regarding species introductions to the woodland

Other News

We have been awarded £1500 from the NATWEST DIY SOS Fund

By the time of the Trustees meeting we hope to have engaged a new Administrator who will hopefully be able to attend the Trustees meeting to meet everyone before the OWM

Appendix 1: Housekeeping Schedule

DUE DATE	TASK	ADDITIONAL INFO
January	Agree dates for Trustees Meetings, Open Woods Meetings, AGM and intended newsletter publication dates.	Quarterly meeting cycle is currently Feb, May, August and November
March	Annual Confirmation Statement due 28th March annually (with 2-week window for completion)	Online via Companies House (c.£13 pa). Reminder email goes to Roo.
April	Woods Insurance Policy Renewal (current policy expires 12/4/25). 2024 renewal was £866.37.	Email renewal. Policy currently with Keegan & Pennykid. Encompass Charity Scheme: Policy No - RKK958436. Reminder email goes to Graeme.
May	Arrange Forest School Summer Camp (if going ahead)	Forest School Leader + 2 volunteers per day.
June/July	Tree Inspection	Completed bi-annually (June/July & Dec/Jan).
August	Give notice of AGM	Courier Advert and noticeboard
August/September	Update Directors details to reflect any changes made at AGM	Online via Companies House
December	Trustees Annual Report to be submitted to OSCR	Currently done by Roger
December/January	Tree Inspection	Completed bi-annually (June/July & Dec/Jan)