

Woods Report

May 2025 (Q1 April to June and Q2 July to September)

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?

Current Quarter - Q1

We have the following dates for Volunteer Sessions: 13th and 27th April, 11th and 25th May - LCV will take new bookings from the end of June. I propose that we hold a couple of log days to tie in with site clearance of areas to be planted up (Greenskies Project) and pause over the summer holidays with LCV coming back in mid August and September. Average group size is 11 volunteers. * needs to be discussed further to contract renewal.

We have been working on Wood Fuel sessions which have been a great success with 11 customers receiving logs and generating an income of £2285, there is one further order still to fulfill which will bring the total to £2400. As mentioned in the last Woods Report, we would like to run more of these sessions as they are such good funding generators. Ruth has offered to volunteer as a leader to run some sessions when she has time available, but we should continue to encourage others to come forward and lead on these events. We could do far more, but within our average fortnightly volunteering programme, there are too many other aspects of woodland management which will use Nev's time.

Lothian Conservation Volunteers have been working with us again from 27th April, we have been focusing on checking if young trees are still alive, checking stakes and guards and fixing as necessary, and weeding around the trees.

We were donated a mixture of approximately 30 oak and hazel seedlings which were self seeded in local gardens and potted on. These have now been planted to fill gaps where previous restocking has failed.

We were successful in our application to the Woodland Trust for a free tree pack, and will receive 420 hawthorn, rowan, blackthorn, silver birch, hazel and common oak saplings in November (date TBC). Catherine applied to Loganair Green Skies Community Fund earlier in the year and we found out the grant application was successful mid-April. The funding total is £3180 and is to cover the clearance, ground preparation, and replanting of two areas of the woodland where we have had to fell groups of trees. The aim would be to complete this work before the end of the year, ideally having all trees in the ground this side of Christmas. Loganair are arranging a Press Release and photo shoot, dates TBC.

We are still waiting for lists from Dorothy Lyle for moth events and visits from the Edinburgh Natural History Society. Nev will give her a gentle reminder, but it is more important to keep the NATs on board to run events and record for us, than pester them for records as we have no urgent use for them. The NATs visited the woodland again on April 27th and Dorothy is offering to hold another moth event on Sunday 25th May, before the LCV volunteering event. Nev will remind her that lists from these visits would be welcome.

Ben and Alison Averis are in the process of carrying out a vascular plant survey. We agreed at the last OWM that there is a keen community interest in their findings, so they will give a short presentation and a woodland walk on . Ben suggested that the fieldwork would be complete by June.

Catherine has applied to Inspiring Scotland's Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund for £5,970 to go towards "Gifford Community Woodland - Ecosystem Management Project" which would cover: Ben and Alison Averis's National Vegetation Classification survey, a public event and guided walk to share the findings, GIS mapping to accurately record woodland features and a detailed invasive species assessment to inform a control plan, an updated woodland management plan, water surveys, and volunteer training sessions for chainsaw usage. We will find out if we are successful in June.

A policy regarding introductions to the woodland is ongoing and will be made public in due course, but will be led by current guidance from UK Forestry Standards and Forestry & Land Scotland. Guidance from Ben and Alison's survey will feed into this policy and they will discuss this as part of their OWM presentation. We will develop this policy once we have the results from Ben and Alison's survey. All other parties that we have contacted to date have recommended retaining nativeness wherever possible.

Rhododendron clearance has been halted now that we are into the bird nesting season. We will continue with this work in September. We will soon have completed all initial eradication and will probably begin to focus on any regen after the New Year.

Most people will be aware of a spate of vandalism earlier this quarter. It appears to have calmed down and there have been no further incidents. There is some evidence of use of the fire pit by others which we will continue to keep an eye on.

Plans for Q2

Volunteer Dates TBC

AGM is on 24th August and as it is our 10th Anniversary the Comms Team have suggested a party / event alongside the AGM. Ideas include hiring the Village Hall and showcasing photos, thoughts etc of the woods, hosting a party in the woods with images etc on display, asking people to speak at the event and tell stories of the woods... All TBC and more discussion required. We will need to factor in time to plan marketing and organisation of the event.

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

Current Quarter

Catherine applied to Crystal Rig Wind Farm Fund for funding for Forest School and we were successful in receiving £3000 for forest school. This means that GetOut are able to provide two blocks this Summer Term - a nurture group on Tuesdays and the P2 class on Friday mornings. We have £1000 left to spend from this fund and need to decide how to allocate. The money was to be used for Forest School and path and woodland maintenance (no set allocation of funds).

GetOut Forest School dates are:

Tuesday Forest School all day; April 29th, May 6th, 13th, 20th, June 3rd, 10th.

Friday Forest School AM; May 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, June 6th.

Yester Primary School will pay £4800 for 25/26 Nurture blocks. Fundraising is needed to pay for the P2 blocks.

Catherine and Nev met Holly, Chloe and Liz from GetOut on 25th April. We discussed increased costs, storage issues and funding. Storage suggestions to be discussed at the next Trustee's meeting.

GetOut also have two other offerings for locals - family sessions and forest therapy. The family sessions would be on Wednesdays May 21st, 28th, June 4th, 11th (but is still TBC when this report is being written). Forest therapy would be fortnightly or monthly on either Monday or Friday mornings, again dates TBC as this is new.

Lammermuir Church held a Forest Church session in the woods on Friday 2nd May.

We had a Meet the Moths event with Dorothy Lyle on Saturday 24th May. The moth night trap was successful and Dorothy was able to identify several species such as Pebble Prominent, Brimstone, Carpet Moth, Bee Moth, Scalloped Hazel, Pale Prominent and Scorched Wing. Dorothy will send a

detailed report to Nev. Dorothy proposed another event on Saturday 28th June to tie in with Insect Week - we could advertise this within the next week or so and ticket the event on eventbrite, max 12 adults. Free event?

Buck and Birch held a publicity event to tie in with their birch sap harvest. Sadly, since then they have had a fire at their unit which has destroyed all their stock and reserve ingredients. Rupert and Tom are currently waiting to hear from their insurers and once they know the insurance position, the Board will decide with them how to take the company forward. We can anticipate that they probably won't be in a position to help us with catering for the AGM.

Plans for Q2

Fundraising for Forest School for 2025/26 P2 blocks - work with GetOut to secure funding.

We need to look into how best we can support GetOut with regards to storage facilities.

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

Current Quarter

General tree safety work is on-going. Only essential work will be carried out during bird nesting season. Any tree deemed to be a significant threat, will need to be assessed accordingly for risk to public and property, as well as visual inspections for nesting. Some less urgent trees may need to be

pushed back into next autumn. This programme will be continued by Nev with a mixture of volunteer and contractor assisted days. A thorough entire woodland tree safety assessment is still outstanding.

John Wrinn, on completion of training may be able to support other volunteer opportunities. Although there is no progress on training, John and Andrew Riva installed new water bars at the end of March with some extra, paid for, labour. A formal "thank you" to them both at the next OWM would be appropriate. Some areas of the path could do with some dressing now that this work has been completed, but until we have some significant rain it will be hard to assess how much is required.

Further to Nev's meeting with path contractors in early February, we are still awaiting guideline costs to resurface the path network. This will be only an indicative price as material costs are in constant flux and inflation is difficult to predict.

We put in an expression of interest for the Ian Findlay Paths for All funding but we didn't meet the criteria, however we are monitoring when their Community Path Fund will open for applications.

Plans for Q2

As part of WalkFest, the East Lothian Ramblers are planning a walk from Gifford past Yester Estate, Woodhead and returning via Inglisfield then a "figure of eight" through the woods. They have asked if someone would like to meet them to talk about the woods history, volunteering opportunities etc - we need a volunteer for this if anyone is free on Sunday 13th August around 3pm to meet them at the Welfare Camp.

Jill Alexander keen to host more silent walks - dates TBC.

Some trees that require attention are within the Conservation Area and the council need to be approached for consultation/approval. Trees within the Dead/Dying/Dangerous category,(exempt from consultation), have been dealt with. We will not work on these trees until September so this is not a priority at the moment.

Open Woods Meeting on 2nd June.

Key decisions required

- Policy regarding species introductions to the woodland. Nev has been in contact with Forestry & Land Scotland for guidance, as well as The Woodland Trust. Local ecologists Ben & Alison Averis are currently carrying out field work to assist with this process. This consultation is ongoing - see above.
- Is approval for ongoing tree safety work required?
- New contract for Nev needs to be discussed and terms agreed.
- Forest School leaders have requested onsite storage for equipment

- Can income from logs from Greenskies Project be directed into purchase of new powerbarrow?
- Does the woodland have, or can we/trustee's draw up a Woodland Strategy, to inform the community of our vision for the woodlands for the future - this relates more to usage than to management. Nev has been approached on several occasions about concerns regarding how busy the woods have become and how this is putting off people who were regular users from visiting the woodland.

Other News

Bee keeping enquiry - discuss at Trustee's Meeting

Catherine has updated the address for the woods to Graeme's address for OSCR

Catherine working on a 'Fundraising Tracker' and a list of funding applications - will distribute this and everyone can see what we have applied for and decide what we would like to apply for in the future

WalkFest Ramblers will be passing the woods and have asked if someone would like to meet them to tell them about the woods, volunteering opportunities etc. Is a trustee available? 13th August around 3pm at the Welfare Camp.

Appendix 1: Housekeeping Schedule

[COPY BELOW - MAIN VERSION IN EACH TRUSTEES AGENDA]

Due Date	Task	Additional Info
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree dates for Trustees Meetings, Open Woods Meetings, AGM and intended newsletter publication dates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meeting cycle is currently Feb, May, August and November
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Confirmation Statement due end March annually (with 2-week window for completion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online via Companies House (c.£13 pa). Reminder email goes to Graeme / Gmail.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woods Insurance Policy Renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email renewal. Policy currently with Keegan & Pennykid. Encompass Charity Scheme: Policy No - RKK958436. Reminder email goes to Graeme.
June/July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed bi-annually • (June/July & Dec/Jan).
June/July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager Contract Renewal (this year?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees to discuss
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give notice of AGM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courier Advert and noticeboard
August/September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Directors' details to reflect any changes made at AGM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online via Companies House

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December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees Annual Report to be submitted to OSCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently done by Serena
December/January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree Inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed bi-annually (June/July & Dec/Jan)