

Woods Report

August 2025 (Q2 July to September and Q3 October to December)

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

We have the following dates for Volunteer Sessions: 9th August for a Wood Fuel session and 17th, 30th August and 21st September with LCV.

LCV will be working on Rhododendron and regen, local volunteers will concentrate on woodfuel and clearing sites for replanting sites affected by ash dieback as part of the Loganair Greenskies Project (see next).

Tree Replanting Project (Greenskies Funding) update - We'll start tree safety work this month. This includes the trees identified as needing to be felled as part of the Greenskies Project. Catherine has ordered trees from the Woodland Trust, but we still need to order stakes and guards. We have approx 100 stakes from previous projects, so will use those and supplement with the bought balance (Nev to confirm numbers required). A family volunteering day to plant the trees needs to be promoted. Nev is suggesting Saturday 22nd November as a potential date - it is the weekend following the next OWM so we can promote it there to boost interest. It also gets the trees in the ground as early as possible in the dormant season and well before everyone gets involved in Christmas activities.

Ben Averis has completed his NVC Survey, you can read it here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cbj2u8tbxzt_AprumnnsFOZTEsEsjqP9/view?usp=drive_link

Ben and Alison hosted a guided walk to discuss their findings in place of the OWM on 2nd June. This was very popular and we had 26 members of the community attend. Catherine will set up a table at the AGM on 24th August with photos and information from the survey as well as print outs for

people to read. Graeme & Nev will be available to discuss, but this will mainly be for dissemination, with any input encouraged at the next Open Woods Meeting where NVC will be the focus.

We were successful in our application for Inspiring Scotland's Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund for £5,970 to go towards "Gifford Community Woodland - Ecosystem Management Project" which will pay for the 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. The chainsaw workshop has been booked for 15/16th Nov. We have also had interest from community members about running a 'Paid For' course for those who cannot volunteer. We will ask for notes of interest as well as advertising the funded course.

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 and guidance from the NVC survey. This will also be informed by the Community discussion at the next Open Woods Meeting, as people reflect on the findings of the NVC Survey results.

We will continue rhododendron clearance in September, as this is clearly beneficial as shown from the NVC survey. We will soon have completed all initial eradication and will probably begin to focus on any regen after the New Year.

We kindly received £405 from Gifford Community Choir. Graeme asked Adam to thank the choir. GD to do a public thank you to all of our funders inc. the choir and friends at the AGM.

We have purchased a Power Barrow with this funding.

Graeme met with Catherine's friend Marlyn Bald who is Head of Strategy at Cyrenians. Marlyn is working on developing strategies for different charities pro bono and offered to look at GCLC's strategy. Graeme to update.

Plans for Q3

Volunteer dates TBC - we can book LCV for three days per quarter. The next block (Oct - Dec) isn't open for applications yet, but Nev will look for 3 days that work with his schedule - local volunteers tend not to be so interested in the LCV sessions, and LCV can self-manage. It probably makes sense to book them for Oct and early November, as we have the chainsaw course and tree planting for local volunteers in November. Woodfuel sessions can continue in November and December also.

Chainsaw course on 15th and 16th November - open to applications from people who are interested in vocational training and committing to volunteering in the woods on a regular basis (see above).

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

Mr Brown, the interim Headteacher at Yester Primary School, stood down from his post at the end of May and Mr Orr (Assistant HT at North Berwick Primary School) took over from him. Mr Orr will be at Yester until October and it's not yet known if Mrs Mercer is returning from her secondment. In February, Mr Brown agreed with Nev and GetOut to pay £4800 for Forest School nurture blocks for 25/26. Catherine sent an email to confirm this and chased up in April and May, however there was no reply. Catherine and Holly spoke to Mr Orr about Forest School and Mr Brown's confirmation of funding, however Mr Orr didn't know anything about it and before the end of term he confirmed to GetOut that Yester are not in a position to fund Forest School for 25/26. This is disappointing news and short notice for GetOut. GetOut have asked GCLC if they can fund P2 or Nurture sessions for 25/26 at £5000 (figures TBC with detail by GetOut, but we estimate 4 x 6 week blocks at £1200/block). This is to be discussed at the Trustees meeting. In the last Woods Report we highlighted that fundraising was needed for the P2 blocks and this is still the case. Catherine has offered to work alongside GetOut to research and write funding applications.

We received £3000 from Crystal Rig Wind Farm for Forest School and woodland maintenance. GetOut invoiced us for £2000 for two summer blocks which have been completed. We have £1000 remaining for Forest School and / or path and woodland maintenance (there is no set allocation of funds).

Storage facilities for GetOut were discussed at the last Trustees Meeting. Nev has investigated costs for various options and the most cost effective solution would be to purchase a 20' container @ £2,400 +vat. It would be sensible to have a personnel door installed to make best use of the container and purchase a security container padlock. Including transport and vat, the whole package would cost £4506.00. We would have to do some ground preparation before taking delivery and would need the help of a friendly farmer with a telehandler to position the container. A site meeting for trustees can be arranged to agree a location, but we are looking at the eastern boundary of what was the path contractors compound.

Plans for Q3

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

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

Ask Andy McBain if he might apply to NatWest / RBS again in September time?? (Action for ?)

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

Only essential work has been carried out during bird nesting season. Our twice yearly Tree Safety Inspection (summer assessment) is now complete. Approx 90 trees need some attention. This safety programme will be continued by Nev with a mixture of volunteer and contractor assisted days. Some of the cost for this work will be covered by the Greenskies Project.

John Wrinn 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 AGM 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, although nothing looks urgent at the moment. Graeme will thank them at the AGM.

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. Nev has had recent correspondence with the contractor, and anticipates costs very shortly - possibly available by Trustee's meeting.

Jill Alexander led a Silent Walk on 19th July.

Gifford Flower Show is on 17th August and we will have a stand at the show to promote volunteering opportunities at the woods. Lyn Cowie and Lucy Wrinn are keen to attend to chat to others about volunteering opportunities. Trustees attending TBC.

Nev is hoping to attend the Knox Academy Volunteering Fayre on 29th August, but we have not had a confirmation from Knox that they have space for us yet.

AGM is on 24th August, 4-6pm at the Village Hall. The Comms Team has been planning the AGM. We have funding from Inspiring Scotland for a public event to discuss the findings from the NVC survey, so it makes sense to use the funding to cover both requirements and celebrate the ongoing success of the Woodland Project. We expect to host around 40 attendees and will have a bar, canapés, a brief AGM, and five themed information tables - NVC survey results, volunteering opportunities, friend scheme, GetOut Forest School, Blast from the Past with photos etc. Additional activities include a continuous-loop film, a quiz, and a prize draw. £500 budget is allocated for food, drinks, and prizes. The AGM was advertised in the courier on 24 July and Catherine will advertise across social media and put posters around the village.

Plans for Q3

Some trees that require attention are within the Conservation Area/Tree Preservation Orders and the council need to be approached for consultation/approval. Trees within the Dead/Dying/Dangerous category, (exempt from consultation), will be dealt with as a priority. We will commence this work in August and move on to trees within the conservation area /TPO coverage as soon as we have the appropriate permissions.

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 have carried out field work to assist with this process. This consultation is ongoing - see above.
- Is approval for ongoing tree safety work required?
- Forest School leaders have requested onsite storage for equipment

Other News

Community Farm: A member of the community, Greig Robertson (Director/Founder of Growing Together - a community garden project in Edinburgh), has suggested that there could be local interest in a community farm, similar to the one recently opened in Tynninghame as a CIC. A meeting was held in the village hall on 30th June to discuss whether to take this forward and assess community interest. There was a presentation from one of the founders of the Tynninghame farm. The meeting was well attended and the audience included Nev and Serena. As Station Yard had informally been identified as one of the potential sites for the farm, Nev explained the issues with access and promoted the procedure for how proposals within the GCLC project are assessed. It was also mooted that the Gifford Feuar's Land adjacent to the village by Walden Terrace might be

another option and that GCLC could potentially be identified as a partner to offer an umbrella of governance to the project. Greig was at pains to make it clear that he would not be interested in driving the project himself. The woodland has been added to the correspondence list without our blessing. The latest correspondence was as follows:

“It was a really positive meeting at the village hall and I appreciate the ideas and suggestions that came from the floor. If people are willing we could perhaps organise a meeting to discuss next steps, including setting up a steering group, commissioning a the feasibility study looking at, potential site/s, business plans etc. We would want to reach out to Gifford Community Land Company, Feuars of Gifford etc, perhaps prepare a manifesto.

Communications wise, how would folk like to organise ourselves? I’m open to suggestions, I have set up a WhatsApp group, I’d need your phone numbers for that, or we can use email, I have BCC’d this email in the first instance, but if folk are happy for emails to be shared, we can open that up.”

Ramblers are passing through the woods on Sunday 31st August around 3pm and have asked if someone would be around to meet them to talk about history of the woods, volunteering etc. Graeme going to meet the group.

Bee keeping enquiry - to be discuss at Trustee’s Meeting and decision made

PVG - All Trustees need a PVG due to updated legislation. Catherine has applied for PVGs for Graeme, Ian and Serena. Need to see copies or access David and Adam’s PVGs. Not heard back from Tristan re PVG application so did not apply. Catherine is looking into PVGs for herself and Nev and if a child safeguarding course would be beneficial.

Catherine has created a ‘Funding Tracker’ to keep track of all of our funding applications: [Funding Tracker](#)

We have been short-listed in the Scottish Finest Woodlands Awards for Best (Large) Community Woodland. We have a meeting with the judges on Friday 8th August. It is unlikely that we will know the outcome before the AGM, but fingers crossed, we may have something exciting to announce at the next OWM.

Appendix 1: Housekeeping Schedule

[COPY BELOW - MAIN VERSION IN EACH TRUSTEES AGENDA]

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 end March annually (with 2-week window for completion)	Online via Companies House (c.£13 pa). Reminder email goes to Graeme / Gmail.
April	Woods Insurance Policy Renewal	Email renewal. Policy currently with Keegan & Pennykid. Encompass Charity Scheme: Policy No - RKK958436. Reminder email goes to Graeme.
June/July	Tree Inspection	Completed bi-annually - done
June/July	Project Manager Contract Renewal	Completed
August	Give notice of AGM	Courier Advert and noticeboard - completed
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 Serena
December/January	Tree Inspection	Completed bi-annually (June/July & Dec/Jan)