



Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of the CWA Newsletter.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this newsletter, and especially to those who responded so positively when asked out of the blue - the Newsletter is richer for your contributions.

Hopefully there's something here for everyone, whether you're: interested in hearing about other woodlands (Abriachan, Applecross, Leadburn and Maryculter community woods all feature); are in pursuit of sustainable funding; or hanker for a hut!

Additionally you can find out more about CWA's new Community Woodland Group mentoring programme, Growing Together, and find out possible ways to measure your visitor numbers (something you might need to know if applying for a grant).

With best wishes, the CWA Team

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Photo credit: www.beechbrae.com

Abriachan Forest Trust - exchange visit

Sharon Smith
CWA Member Support Officer

On Sunday 26th November 2023, CWA ran its first exchange visit, in a while, at Abriachan Forest Trust, in Invernesshire. The following community woodland groups were represented in total by 20 people:

- Aird Community Trust
- Fernaig Community Trust
- Dunain Community Woods
- Broadford and Strath Community Company
- Maryburgh Community Woodland
- Culduthel Community Woods &
- Aigas Community Forest



This shared learning experience was wonderful, offering all attendees the opportunity to learn about some of the results achieved at Abriachan.



A guided tour through the maze of easy access paths, following Abriachan's map, allowed for us to discuss issues relating to:

- paths, walkways and bridges
- Abriachan's Forest School Nursery
- cycle paths
- funding and community building projects
- how Abriachan have involved schools over the years
- ways to overcome barriers to involving certain groups from the wider community

On return to the classroom, we had a visual representation walk-through of some of the ways Abriachan has grown over the years.



Following a delicious lunch, the visitors were treated to a safari tour around the Great Glen Way, stopping at the fire processing area and also to look at different blocks of forest and how they are managed for economic and social purposes as well as for habitat restoration. We learned about the history of the woodland management of those different areas of the forest, and also about the hopes and aspirations of the community woodland trust as it moves forward.



Following the Safari, as night drew in, we returned to the classroom to share some of our collective challenges of community needs, forest operations, membership and sustainability and some discussions around governance. Dinner followed and all attending departed with warm hearts, full bellies and lots of ideas, tips and suggestions to inspire them in their own community woodland.

CWA would like to thank all the team at Abriachan for being excellent hosts, and for supporting CWA in their work.

Applecross Community Company

Amy Clarkson - Woodland Development Officer



We were excited when Amy let us know that Applecross CC had secured 4-year funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the development of their community wood. She kindly agreed to write this article to share the news.



The Applecross Community Company is delighted to have secured four-year funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the development of Coille Coimhearsnachd Na Comraich | Applecross Community Woodland.

The funding will enable the community to restore the 14.5-hectare former Sitka spruce plantation into a thriving native woodland, Coille a’ Thorra Ghairbh, improving its biodiversity while promoting and showcasing its archaeological features.

The project will be delivered in partnership with the Applecross Historical Society and will design Gaelic-led interpretation which will demonstrate the interdependence of our cultural and natural heritage.

Featuring a mosaic of habitats planted in relation with the site’s long history of human activities, Coille a’ Thorra Ghairbh will be a woodland that has been grown, designed, and nurtured by the community, with its living heritage supporting communities of the future.



Photo: CommunityShelterPressRelease

Coille Coimhearsnachd Na Comraich | Applecross Community Woodland was established in 2019. The Applecross Community Company acquired the 14.5-hectare site in 2021 through the support of the Scottish Land Fund and clear-felled the mature Sitka Spruce. The income generated from the timber enables ACC to make a substantial contribution to the delivery of this four-year project.

Over the past year, with support from **Highland Coastal Communities Fund**, **Community Woodland Association** and **North Highland Initiative**, ACC have

- successfully established a community tree nursery growing trees from local provenance seed
- delivered a volunteer programme to construct a timber-frame shelter, and
- held several community events.

With this multiple year funding from **National Lottery Heritage Fund** now secured, ACC can plan for a range of activities including:

- planting nine-thousand native trees and
- engaging a wider range of people in heritage
- with opportunities for green skills and improving wellbeing

The funding supports a Woodland Development Officer, capacity building for staff and volunteers, development of amenities, educational spaces, a digital platform for the project and long-term income generating opportunities.

ACC is very grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and their staff for this long-term support. We look forward to working in close partnership with the **Historical Society**, as well as **Applecross Primary School**, **Appleseed Community Garden and Allotments**, and **Applecross Archaeological Association**, and many other community groups and individuals who will contribute and enjoy the benefits of this project.

Thank you to all the community volunteers who have made this project the success it is so far. Over the following years we will be holding a programme of events including an annual festival and a range of specialist craft workshops and trainings which will be open to the public. We look forward to welcoming you to Coille a' Thorra Ghairbh!

Find out more about Applecross CC @ www.applecrosscommunitycompany.org



COILLE COIMHEARSNACHD
NA COMRAICH
APPLECROSS
COMMUNITY WOODLAND



End of 2023 Review of Hutting

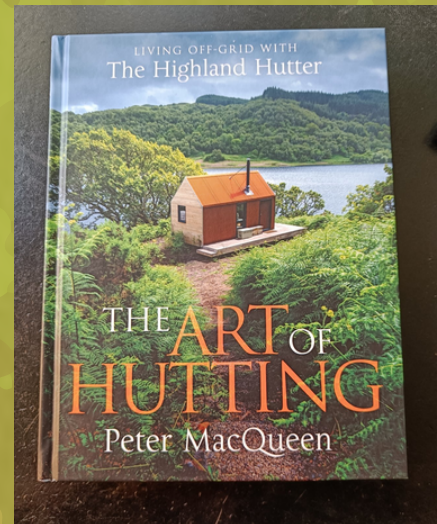
Donald McPhillimy

Huge thanks to Donald for his willingness to write an article on hutting for the Newsletter at short notice - the perils of being clocked as a guest speaker on a hutting podcast, whilst also being a CWA member.

In a gloomy world of wars, pestilence, dodgy politics and environmental decline, a hut is a place of warmth, light and serenity. A place to switch off from the daily grind and reconnect with nature, and other hutters.

The world of hutting is buoyant as we prepare to leave 2023. We are seeing the first small shoots of something which may become much bigger. Huts are popping up all over the place. They are usually nestled in amongst the trees so you may not be aware of them yet.

And the word is out there. Peter McQueen's beautiful new book, *The Art of Hutting* has just been launched by Black and White Publishing. Ironically it is in full colour with outstanding photographs.



Articles about huts pop up in the Sunday papers quite regularly and BBC Radio 4's Open Country had a programme recently about the huts at Carbeth (original huts) and Carnock (new wave huts) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001rypb>

Thinking about Carnock, this pilot study site is finally happening. On land managed by Forest and Land Scotland, the twelve hutting families are fully engaged and their huts are starting to be built. One is finished, three are well on and the rest are started.

Here is Linda, standing in front of her hut. Now finished, if you can say that a hut is ever finished.

The site will be quiet over winter and a big burst of activity is likely in the Spring.



Meanwhile at Cash Wood, Falkland (yes, the same family as the C&W singer) 3 or 4 more huts are being built and the **Hut of Well Being** is nearing completion. This fantastic project is going to bring much happiness into the lives of those who are terminally ill and their carers. Huts at The Encampment, Torr Farm, North Cloich and many other sites have been built or are in process. Many individual huts are happening and many, many other aspiring hutters are dreaming of their huts.

What of 2024 and beyond?

There are three sectors of land ownership in Scotland - private, public and community. Private landowners are realising that family huts can generate an income on unproductive land for minimal cost. It is starting to happen although people are beguiled by the higher incomes on offer through holiday lets. Holiday lets, however, are higher cost, higher maintenance and don't create that sense of community.

Once the huts on the pilot study FLS site are built, the success of the project will be assessed and lessons learned. It's likely that other suitable sites around the National Forest Estate will be found and hut sites developed.

Which leaves community owned or managed land. Family huts (the **Thousand Huts** model) are ideal for community sites as they bring in new people with fresh ideas who often want to engage with the existing community and buy some of their supplies, use cafes, employ tradespeople and visit local attractions. Just as with private owners, suitable sites for hutting are to be found in many places and the huts, by definition, are low impact.

The **Thousand Huts** campaign sadly is no more. We ran out of funds and everyone got busy with other activities. However, there is a wealth of experience built up which can be shared. If you are interested in hutting and would like to ask a question or have an appraisal visit, contact Reforesting Scotland at heartwood@reforestingscotland.org and we will see what we can do to help.

Democratic Finance

Katie Little-Sadler
Community Shares Scotland

Ahead of our on-line event in January, a look at democratic finance and how the new DTAS programme might benefit members.



For many community groups across Scotland, funding is becoming increasingly competitive, difficult to access, and unsustainable in the longer term with cuts across the sector.

At the Development Trusts Association Scotland, we are looking to support communities to take a different approach to finance and funding models.


We believe that democratic finance is the best vehicle to bring about this change. Therefore, in partnership with **Scottish Communities Finance Ltd**, we are developing a progressive programme focused on increased knowledge and use of democratic finance models that will result in more money circulating within communities for greater public benefit, with sustainability and community ownership at the heart.

Our Democratic Finance links to the fourth finance pillar of the Scottish Government's Community Wealth Building agenda. This finance pillar identifies that flows of investment and financial institutions should work for local people, communities, and businesses. DTAS aim to lead on this pillar, grounding the theory in a practical approach so that communities benefit directly, demonstrating that money can and should be generated, owned and controlled by the community.

Our **Community Shares Scotland** programme has proven the many strengths of citizen investment in community led enterprises that serve local need, from pubs & shops to hydro schemes. By supporting local people and organisations to invest in projects through community shares, local economic development is boosted within communities and this community-led investment (£19 million in community shares raised to date) in turn drives mutual confidence and agency, which can attract support and investment from other sources. Indeed, many communities who have run community share offers are now able to invest in other community projects.

Sleat's community owned hydro scheme up and running





“We had our share launch in 2013, expecting to get around half the money we needed on the basis we’d be able to borrow the rest. In-fact we got everything we needed inside about three weeks. That astonished us but hopefully a number of community groups see what we’ve done and think ‘ we can do that too’.”

Martin Petty, Chairperson, Harlaw Hydro

GCE - Glasgow Community Energy with their first solar roof scheme

Since 2018, **Scottish Communities Finance Ltd** has championed community bonds as a new form of democratic finance for community and social enterprises across Scotland. Offering a unique model, it has assisted organisations seeking finance for renewable energy, new builds and business development and growth.

Building on the successes and ethos of both **Community Shares Scotland** and **Scottish Communities Finance**, the programme will focus on increased knowledge and use of financial models that can generate and capture wealth within a community. These financial models are particularly pertinent as we attempt to move away from grant dependency to build sustainable community-led & owned enterprises.

We will initially focus on exploring the following models:

- Growth of community shared ownership of renewable energy developments across Scotland
- More productive local use of income from renewable energy developments
- Piloting a **Scottish Community Shares Booster programme** to grow the community shares market in harder to reach communities and sectors. This will be based on the good practice and success of the **English Community Shares Booster**
- Increasing awareness and use of community bonds and other more affordable and flexible debt options
- Developing and piloting community-based legacy gifting
- Creating a more coordinated system of philanthropic giving at a grassroots community level
- Awareness raising and support for organisations to utilise community lotteries
- Better awareness and use of common good funds and assets
- Expanding donation-based crowdfunding
- Promoting more cross community and cross sectoral investment via democratic finance instruments

The programme will also include a capacity building strand – focused on raising awareness of democratic finance models, both with communities and third sector intermediaries. We will champion a collaborative approach, bringing in sectoral expertise from other intermediaries where needed and are keen to learn from communities who are already using alternative models.



With the **Community Woodlands Association**, we are running an

Introduction to Local Democratic Finance Tuesday 16th January 2024 (2-3.30pm)

The session will aim to increase awareness, knowledge and use of financial models that generate and capture wealth within a community. These financial models are particularly pertinent as funding becomes harder to attract, and we attempt to move away from grant dependency towards building thriving, sustainable and resilient enterprises.

The session will provide information on:

- Community shares
- Community bonds
- Donation based Crowdfunding
- Case studies

Our Community Shares Scotland programme has proven the many strengths of citizen investment in community led enterprises. By supporting local people and organisations to invest in projects through community shares and other alternative financial models, wealth is retained and boosted within communities.

Please do come along if you'd like to find out more about community shares, community bonds and for an overview of our new programme. [Register here](#) or via the QR code.

Find out about this and other CWA events on our website: www.communitywoods.org/events



Leadburn Community Woodland

Wendy Cunningham

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland

Wendy got in touch simply to notify us of a change to contact details, and before she knew it, was agreeing to writing an article sharing the evolution of Leadburn Community Woodland. Thank you Wendy - hugely appreciated!



Our young woodland, a former Forestry Commission plantation, lies 12 miles south of Edinburgh just inside the Scottish Borders. The original 100-acre site of Lodge Pole pine and Sitka spruce was clear-felled in 2001 and was offered as a community purchase.

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland was formed after a meeting of interested local people and an organised walk along the two former railway lines marking the “A” shape of our main paths.

The land purchase took place in 2006 and was made possible through

- **the Scottish Land Fund (SLF)**
- **Leader Plus funding from Scottish Borders Council and**
- **donations from local supporters**

As volunteers we wanted to have a light touch; encouraging nature to take its course with our intervention used sparingly, creating habitats to be enjoyed by visitors.

The first woodland tree was planted in April 2007 and over subsequent years a total of 9,500 trees (of 38 native species) have been added growing alongside emergent birches and other pioneer species. The path network has been extended and improved as more people have discovered the woodland.

An increase in visitors was most marked following lockdown when people from surrounding settlements discovered the woodland and it has now become a meeting point for families and friends.



Searching for moths at Leadburn - local moth recorder Reuben Singleton with John Woolliams

Volunteers

None of the developments at the woodland would have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, led by Rik Smith.

In the early years we had a small group of four or five regulars who joined our monthly volunteer sessions, but thanks to Rik we now have a group of around 60 volunteers who put in 1200 hours over the last year.

Work includes:

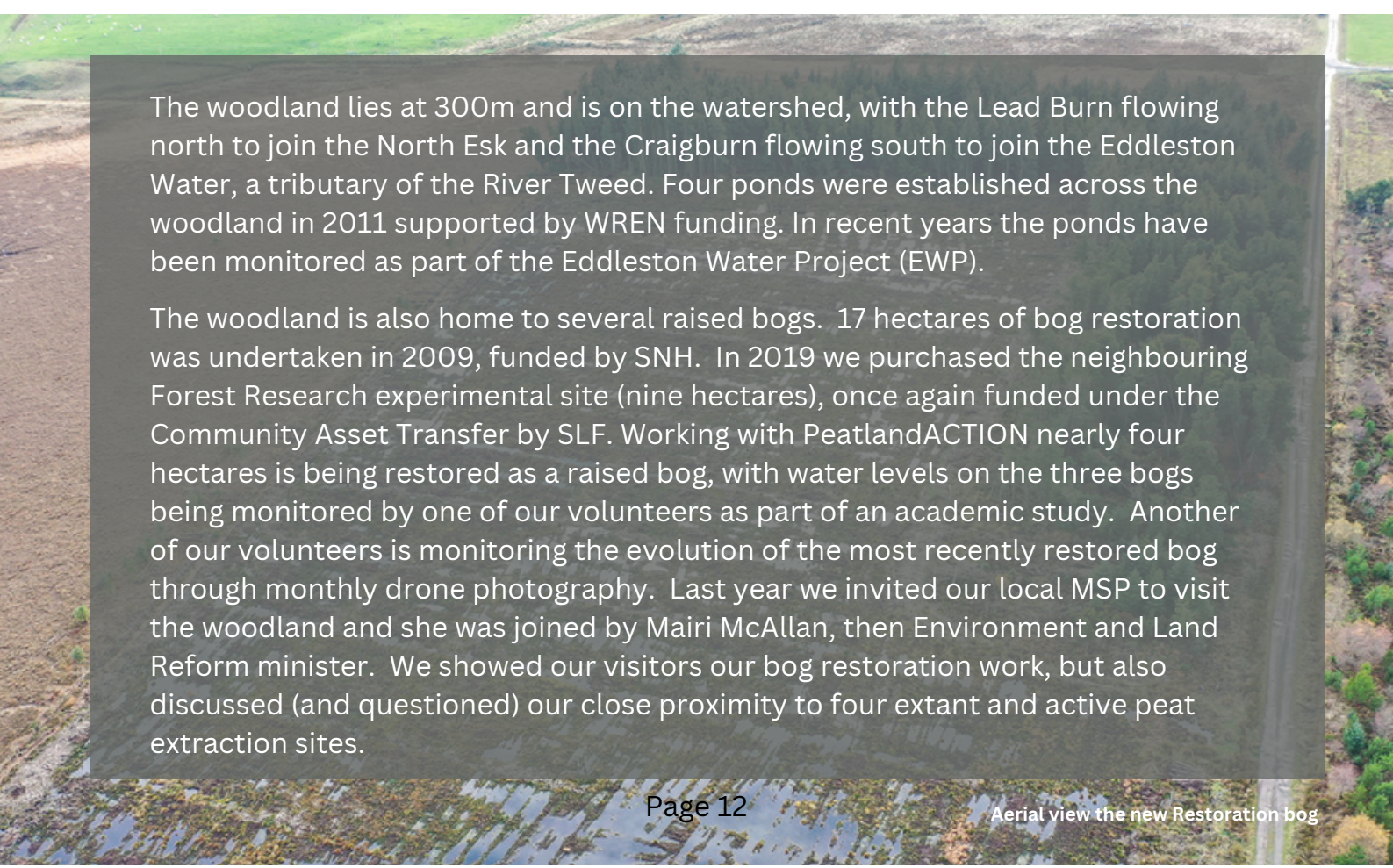
- removing (and reusing) tree tubes from established trees
- clearing ditches, building and maintaining paths
- planting trees and transplanting saplings across the woodland and elsewhere

A volunteer gathering has been held in recent years, allowing those working on different projects and at different times to meet up, have a walk and picnic together to celebrate their achievements.

We also work with volunteer groups such as

- Lothians Conservation Volunteers
- Green Team and
- young people working towards their Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir Trust awards

In summer 2021 we held a successful Bioblitz, supported by various subject experts who were happy to donate their time in identifying which species were present at Leadburn.

An aerial photograph of a bog restoration site, showing a mix of brown peat and green vegetation. A large, semi-transparent dark grey rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text. The text describes the woodland's location, its restoration history, and current monitoring efforts.

The woodland lies at 300m and is on the watershed, with the Lead Burn flowing north to join the North Esk and the Craighburn flowing south to join the Eddleston Water, a tributary of the River Tweed. Four ponds were established across the woodland in 2011 supported by WREN funding. In recent years the ponds have been monitored as part of the Eddleston Water Project (EWP).

The woodland is also home to several raised bogs. 17 hectares of bog restoration was undertaken in 2009, funded by SNH. In 2019 we purchased the neighbouring Forest Research experimental site (nine hectares), once again funded under the Community Asset Transfer by SLF. Working with PeatlandACTION nearly four hectares is being restored as a raised bog, with water levels on the three bogs being monitored by one of our volunteers as part of an academic study. Another of our volunteers is monitoring the evolution of the most recently restored bog through monthly drone photography. Last year we invited our local MSP to visit the woodland and she was joined by Mairi McAllan, then Environment and Land Reform minister. We showed our visitors our bog restoration work, but also discussed (and questioned) our close proximity to four extant and active peat extraction sites.

Christmas Trees

Over the next few weekends our woodland volunteers will be busy, selling young regenerated Lodge Poles and Sitkas fresh from the woodland as Christmas trees.

For a decade these sales funded some of the materials and tools at the woodland, but in the last three years we have been in the fortunate position of being able to donate a total of £30,000 to various environmental charities, from our Christmas tree sales. We have more than 800 supporters who buy our trees and spread the word about our activities.



What's next for Leadburn?

- Our volunteers are now involved with various local “offsite” projects removing rhododendrons on a SSSI, taking conifers off a neighbouring peat bog and reusing tree tubes from trees planted in 2012 as part of the EWP
- At the beginning of December we are hosting a visit from Meer Bomen Nu/More Trees Now from the Netherlands as we are setting up a pilot project to undertake sapling rescue, set up a tree hub at Leadburn and learn about the newly developed Treefinder website/app
- We are working with volunteers from other woodlands, are part of the Northwoods network and look forward to seeing increased biodiversity at the woodland and sharing best practice with others

Do visit!

For more information:

www.leadburnwood.com/

Instagram: [@leadburncommunity](https://www.instagram.com/leadburncommunity)

What3words location: [umbrellas.leave.blockage](https://www.what3words.com/umbrellas.leave.blockage)

What's happening in YOUR woodland?

The quarterly Newsletter is a great opportunity for members to raise awareness of what's happening in their woodland. Whether celebrating achievements or developments, or highlighting challenges, sharing your woodland stories is a great way for the CWA community to find out about and learn from one another.

The Spring Newsletter is due out on or around March 1st.

Short pieces, roughly 700 words, are ideal, along with a few photos.

Please send to jen@communitywoods.org by the **15th February**

Growing Together

CWA's Mentoring Scheme



Growing Together is the overall brand for the CWA mentoring scheme, with three branching roots:

- Professional Forester Mentorship
- CWG to CWG Mentorship
- Peer to Peer Support

The scheme is intended to empower and support CWGs to deliver their objectives for their woodland and community. It will do this by:

- Developing a network of expert volunteers willing to provide free support to CWGs across a range of topics
- Transferring skills and knowledge to CWGs
- Building capacity in CWGs to deliver for themselves
- Encouraging networking and collaboration, within the network of CWGs and others across the country

Our mentors are experienced foresters (or other professionals, where applicable) who have dedicated their careers to understanding and managing forests and woodlands. They bring a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to help CWGs achieve their woodland management goals.

Any member group (CWG) of the CWA can apply for mentorship as part of our Growing Together Professional Mentoring Scheme. This programme is open to all CWGs, whether privately owned or publicly managed.

To apply to participate, simply complete the application process and CWA will be in touch to advise the CWG of the outcome.

[Find out more and apply.](#)

Estimating visitor numbers

We received a query from Heather McClafferty, treasurer at Easter Breich Wood in West Lothian this week, asking how to best estimate visitor numbers (required for a Scottish Forestry grant application). The wood had discounted use of beam counters due to the expense.

CWA's Senior Woodland Officer, Piers Voysey made the following suggestions:



If you are already putting together an application don't have time to wait for the results of counting visitor numbers (as any system used will take a long time - at least a year - to gather sufficient data to be useful), check with your Woodland Officer in Scottish Forestry as to what sort of visitor survey they would accept.

Different approaches to estimating visitor numbers without automatic people counters might be:



Monitor carpark activity over periods of 1 hour at different times of the day, tally the number of cars coming and going, the number of people and dogs, bikes, horse riders, etc entering the wood.



If there are no carparks, focus your attention on monitoring the key paths and similarly, count numbers of people seen over a period at different times of the day

Monitoring needs to be spread over a full year to get any reasonable assessment of numbers using the wood.

A short-term approach is to justify the application based either on:

- **the need** - for example informal paths are being damaged by erosion (boots, hooves, bike tyres) and need to be upgraded to enable everyone to enjoy their experience of being in the woodland, or on
- **the potential** - you will create new access points and improved paths to enable the population of Easter Breich (population estimate) to enjoy the woodland.

Beam counters or pressure pad counters

Installing beam counters or pressure pad counters is expensive, but they can be a long-term investment for monitoring use of the woods, understanding that they only monitor one location in the wood.

Install them for at least a year, but to monitor change of use of the woods, have them up permanently. Someone needs to make the time to download, collate and interpret the data.



Trail Cameras

Alternatively consider trail cameras. There is a high risk of them being stolen or vandalised, and you would need to let people know (signs) that surveillance cameras are being used in the wood for monitoring visitor numbers, but they are aimed at feet, and all images will be destroyed once the survey is complete.



Public Event and Questionnaire

A public event to launch a short questionnaire can also be considered. The survey can also be completed online, and people can be asked how often they use the woodland, for example: daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, not at all. Ask them to give their residential postcode to confirm where they come from to use the wood. Compare this information with the population in each of these post code areas. The question is not necessarily about how many people use the wood now, rather, how many will use the wood if the paths and access are improved.

A walk in the woods

Maryculter Woodlands Trust

Jen Pittendreigh
CWA Communications Officer



Although very close to where I live in Aberdeen, I had never been to Maryculter Community Woodlands before discovering it on the CWA members map. I had the pleasure of a very tranquil walk around these lovely woodlands a couple of weeks ago.

The wood was managed as a commercial plantation prior to purchase by MWT and nearly half of the area consists of legacy commercial stands of conifers (mostly sitka spruce with minor lodgepole pine, larch and Norway spruce). Clear-felling in stages over the last 30 years has created a diverse set of habitats dominated by natural regeneration of sitka, lodgepole pine, birch and rowan. Open areas include heather moor, fenland and the riparian zone of the Crynoch Burn.



At the heart of the woods is 'The Nest', a circular, walk-in, sculpture, created in 2019 by local artist Stan Brooks - it's built from Greenheart wood salvaged from Sullom Voe Oil Terminal. Under Stan's supervision, local school children have inserted stick bundles into the wall of the Nest to create an enormous insect hotel.



The website notes that the woods are rich in wildlife:

“The trail cams frequently film red squirrel, roe deer and occasional pine marten. Sightings of badgers, foxes & small mammals are also common. Bird species include long-tailed tits, crossbills, cuckoos, tawny owls, heron, wrens, waxwings, warblers as well as the more abundant garden species.”



The website alerts potential visitors to very limited parking availability, and additionally the Trust are mindful of the impact of lots of visitors on the wildlife.

Find out more about Maryculter Woods on their website:
www.maryculterwoods.com