

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter

As ever, much happening in CWA. Some highlights in this edition of the Newsletter include:

- Read about the recent learning exchange visits to Tarras Valley Nature Reserve, Community Woods and Garden Polbeth and West Calder, Easter Briech Wood, and Beechbrae. Inspired from all that... sign up to the Dronley Community Woodland learning exchange visit coming up very soon - Saturday 15th March!
- As we begin our 2nd year of our Growing Together mentoring scheme, get insight into Applecross Community Woodland's and Evanton Community Wood's very positive experiences of the professional mentoring branch of the programme.
- Catch up with what's happening in the *Our Rainforest Futures* project

We hope you enjoy the Newsletter. As ever if you'd like to contribute an article, we'd love to hear from you: email: admin@communitywoods.org

With warm wishes, the CWA Team

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With grateful thanks to our sponsors:



Professional Mentoring Scheme



Our Growing Together Professional Mentoring Scheme continues to expand, with 5 more groups signed up for professional mentoring this year. We are currently at the matching up and introducing to mentors stage of the process and we look forward to hearing about the impact this specialist support will bring them. CWA continues to be extremely grateful to all of the mentors for their time, expertise and energy they bring to each partnership.

We hope you enjoy reading about Applecross and Evanton's experiences of being mentored by professional foresters, and learning about the impact this has brought to their woodlands.

[Find out more about the Growing Together mentoring scheme](#)

Professional Mentoring Experience - Coille Coimhearsnachd na Comraich | Applecross Community Woodland

Amy Clarkson. Woodland Development Officer.



The first round of the CWA mentoring programme was announced in December 2023, and making an application was the top priority for the start of the new year. **Coille Coimhearsnachd na Comraich | Applecross Community Woodland** was established in 2019 to collectively own and manage the 14.5-hectare site of **Coille a' Thorra Ghairbh (Torgarve Woods)**. The project is managed by **Applecross Community Company** and is led by a group of local volunteers, the Community Woodland Steering Group (CWSG), and myself, the Woodland Development Officer. The mentor support from a professional forester would come at a critical time for our community woodland group.

Following the successful clear-fell operations to remove 8 hectares of Sitka spruce, the first year of development focused on establishing a community tree nursery, building a timber-frame shelter and securing funding for a four-year development period by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable the community to restore the former Sitka spruce plantation into a thriving native woodland for the benefit of local community and visitors. The next major step was to undertake application to the Forestry Grant Scheme for the woodland improvement grant and woodland creation. It was for this task that a mentorship with a professional forester would prove to be invaluable.

Our application to the mentorship programme was successful and we were matched with **Syd House**, a retired head of Perth and Argyll Region of Forestry Commission Scotland, a renowned expert in the history of the trees and landscapes of Perthshire, and a former director of CWA.

Within the first conversations with Syd via zoom, he sought to understand the project holistically and asked a lot of questions to understand where we were in the process. I explained the project and the main tasks ahead, based around developing the woodland planting plan for replanting the site. Within this process we would be taking into consideration all the baseline observations, site assessments, and feedback from community consultations to develop the design and the Woodland Management Plan. This included opportunities for long term income-generation, and planning for various uses of the site including coppicing, educational and recreational activities.

The highlight of the process was having Syd visit Applecross. He joined us in the tree nursery and met with volunteers and staff. The following day I took him around the site, and he examined the woodland thoroughly, making suggestions of many different considerations and answering questions as we walked and talked. Syd encouraged me to think about joining the association of chartered foresters and suggested various trainings which could be beneficial to my career.

In the evening, we had a training meeting with members of the community woodland steering group and Syd spoke through his observations of the woodland, and several key considerations for management, opportunities, risks (such as deer management) and potential for income generating activities. **The CWSG were visibly empowered by hearing Syd's feedback about the site, and the potential that he saw within it.**

Following the site visit, I had two hour-long zoom conversations with Syd discussing our application to the Forestry Grant Scheme. Before I spoke with Scottish Forestry, I had a run through with Syd to make sure that our plans were well considered and that I knew what our requests were, and the rationale for them.



Following the site visit, I had two hour-long zoom conversations with Syd discussing our application to the Forestry Grant Scheme. Before I spoke with Scottish Forestry, I had a run through with Syd to make sure that our plans were well considered and that I knew what our requests were, and the rationale for them.

Our Forestry Grant Scheme application was ultimately successful, and it has been incredibly beneficial to be able to do this as an organisation, without paying for additional support. The opportunity to be mentored by a forester as part of this process has enabled our Community Woodland Steering Group and Woodland Development Officer to make informed decisions within the process and ensure that we were considering best practice and opportunities for both income generating activities and biodiversity enhancement within the design.

Syd was incredibly generous with his time and assured us early in the mentorship programme that his interest in this project continues long after the two days of allotted time. The role of the forester mentor in supporting community woodland groups within any stage of development is incredibly valuable. We can highly recommend as an experience!



Professional Mentoring Experience - Evanton Community Wood Adrian Clark



In February 2024 we were fortunate to be accepted onto the CWA professional forester mentorship programme and were teamed up with **John Ireland**, a long-time forester with particular expertise in health and safety. Our 65-ha wood is a mature mixed woodland, well managed under a system of continuous cover by the previous owners, from whom we bought it in 2012.

We run the wood as volunteers, without any expertise in forestry, so we were glad of the CWA offer of free professional input - and this worked out well for us.

John visited the wood for 2 half-days and met and worked with our woodland management group, which comprises 2 board members and 2 additional volunteers whom we have helped to put through the basic chainsaw training course.



On the first day we toured the woodland and considered issues of health and safety such as zoning by areas of high/intermediate/low duty of care. Where we have encouraged the public into certain areas by providing seating and play equipment, and there is high 'dwell time', we need to ensure maintenance checks and record keeping - it is not just what you do, but what you can prove you do. We considered hung-up trees and recognised that these require consideration of the root plate (if 2/3rds intact OK to leave) and regular monitoring. Standing deadwood may be tolerated and monitored.

The second visit was a practical session with the chainsaw volunteers, jointly assessing trees before felling, chain-sawing ones of varying size and type, using a pulley, while taking account of the duty of care to the volunteers themselves, good working practice including the safety of the public. Advice included: taking no action is a legitimate choice - particularly in low dwell-time areas; planning and communication are vital - agree signals, work slowly and deliberately, plan the work in 5.6m radius circles, do not overlap.

One of the volunteers commented: "This was a highly beneficial day.... it provided an insight into how different types of wood respond to being cut and when and how pulley systems should be used. John's vast knowledge was tested with many questions from everyone in the group and we spent a lot of time discussing safety, not only of the chainsaw operator but the people nearby. We discussed how you should structure your day, easy stuff to start whilst you and your saw warm up, hard stuff in the middle of the day and finishing with easy stuff when you are a bit tired. Overall, a great day with many valuable lessons and plenty experience handed out".

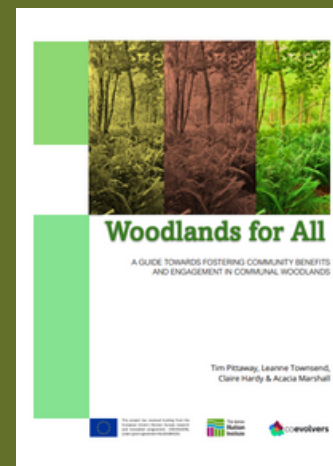
Since the visit one of the volunteers has continued his training, with the help of the community wood, and can now handle wind-blow and hung-up trees. The woodland management group has had several sessions chain-sawing medium-size sitka spruce in an area of predominately silver birch. The regular Friday volunteers have also made excellent progress in the same area using only hand tools. And the management group have had the confidence to start on felling some of the medium-scale beech trees encroaching the ridges where we aim to encourage regeneration of Scots pine. The trees have been turned into fire logs for use by our Friday Futures group for people living with dementia.

Woodlands for All

- a guide towards fostering community benefits and engagement in communal woodlands

The **James Hutton Institute** have collaborated on a woodlands project near Alford as part of a European research initiative.

The resultant interactive guide - **Woodlands for All** - has been designed to help communities unlock the benefits of their local woodlands.



The guide :

- aims to serve as an **engaging and interactive resource for community groups**, fostering collective woodland stewardship and encouraging active local participation
- **can be used by Schools and educators to create outdoor classrooms** that cultivate early connections with nature while environmental practitioners gain practical insights into nature-based project implementation
- aims to **provide community space coordinators with tools** to foster inclusive and sustainable woodland management, enabling them to effectively navigate and address the socio-ecological complexities inherent in community woodlands
- guides **tourism and cultural heritage professionals** on leveraging woodlands for sustainable tourism and cultural preservation

[View and download the guide here](#)

Top Tips for Maintaining a Strong Board and Effective Employee Management

Tuesday 29th April, 7-9pm. Online. Free.

CWA are delighted to invite James Hilder, a well known face in social enterprise, community woodlands and in the world of coaching **Directors and senior staff, to deliver a session for all our Board members across our member groups.**

The session learning outcomes are, attendees will:

- Identify useful activities for making the best use of volunteers on a Board
- Examine what is meant by “succession planning” and explore ways to recruit, motivate and remove members of a Board
- Have a greater understanding of how to ensure Boards are effective in managing staff members
- Explore some minimum requirements for maintaining good communication with employees
- Discuss some do’s and don’ts when the employee/Board relationship starts to go wrong!



[Sign up for a place here](#)

Our Rainforest Futures - project update



Alliance for
Scotland's
Rainforest



Made possible with
**Heritage
Fund**

Our Rainforest Futures

As reported in the [Autumn 2024 Newsletter](#), CWA are delighted to be a partner in the *Our Rainforest Futures** project, which is all about raising awareness and boosting skills so that more people and communities are equipped and enabled to save Scotland's rainforest.

**previously called Building Capacity to Save Scotland's Rainforest*

CWA Members Survey - we want to know what you think!

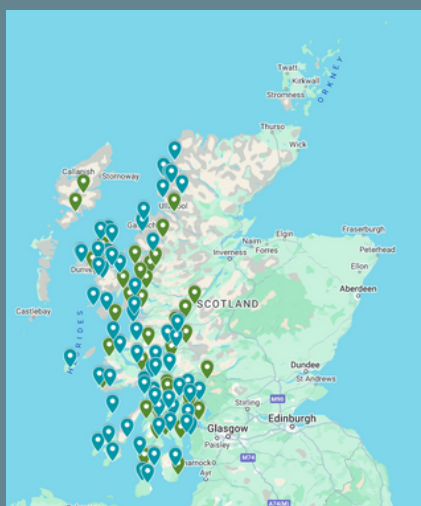
Linking to the project aims (above), CWA member groups in, and on the edge of, the ASR zone have been contacted by CWA asking them to take part in a survey which aims to find out:

- Current approaches to networking
- Training needs/ preferences
- Views and experiences of community enterprise
- Thoughts on funding to enable the Rainforest work

Grateful thanks to the groups who have already completed the survey. There is still time (survey closes 15th March) for other groups to let us know what they think - the survey is mostly tick boxes so doesn't take long to complete, but there's also room to provide more detail if you would like/ have time. [Find the survey here](#)

The survey has also been sent to other community groups living and working in the zone - click on the map (below left) to see more details of who the survey has been sent. If you are aware of any other groups/ interested parties please get in touch to let us know (admin@communitywoods.org) or simply share the link to the survey above.

To find out more about where in Scotland falls into the rainforest zone, click on the map (below, right).



Our Rainforest Futures Project Team

Our Rainforest Futures has been made possible by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Project Development Manager Diane Leishman said: “There is a huge task ahead protecting and expanding Scotland’s rainforest, and we want to see people who live in the rainforest zone empowered to take advantage of employment opportunities that emerge. Some of the skills required are in short supply, so our aim is to provide the training necessary to make sure local people can access these jobs.”

A wide variety of skills will ultimately be required but initial demand is likely to be in dealing with invasive species such as *Rhododendron* and surveying to assess where conservation effort should be targeted. That needs people with skills in things such as biological surveying, drone piloting, species identification and biodiversity monitoring.

Scotland’s rainforest is made up of the native woodlands found on our west coast in a zone running from Sutherland down through Wester Ross and Lochaber to Argyll

High levels of rainfall and relatively mild temperatures year-round provide just the right conditions for some of the world’s rarest mosses, liverworts and lichens.

As little as 30,000 hectares remain – a mere 2% of Scotland’s woodland cover and only a fraction of the area that has suitable climatic conditions.



From left:

Heather Morrison: Rainforest Volunteer Coordinator (employed by Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust)

Helen Mason: Engagement and Communications Officer (employed by Woodland Trust Scotland)

Diane Leishman: Project Development Manager (employed by Woodland Trust Scotland)

Sophie Zych-Watson: Community Engagement Officer (for Scotland’s Rainforest Education Centre)

Find out more about Scotland’s Rainforest

- Read the Our Rainforest Futures [Project Summary](#)
- Follow the [Our Rainforest Futures Facebook page](#)
- Watch Scotland’s rainforest as featured on BBC 1’s [Countryfile](#) recently - with visits to Sunart and Morvern
- Read about the [new tree nursery at Lochaline](#) for Saving Morvern’s Rainforest
- Watch [two beautiful films](#) commissioned by ACT (Argyll Countryside Trust) which celebrate the beauty, spirit, and stories of Argyll’s rainforest communities:
 - *Rainforest Communities Network* was filmed in Glenan Wood and features Friends of Glenan Wood Ranger, Rhyddian Knight
 - *This Is Our Home*, brings together nature, music, and community and features the voices of children from Tighnabruaich Primary School and Lochgilphead Primary School
- Visit the [Alliance for Scotland’s Rainforest](#) website
- Find out about [other rainforest projects](#) in Scotland

Community Woodlands Exchange Visit to Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

Sharon Smith. CWA

‘A community owned landscape rich in nature with people at its heart’



In late January, members of the Community Woodlands Association had the privilege of visiting Tarras Valley Nature Reserve, in Dumfries and Galloway, for an inspiring exchange visit. This expansive 10,500 hectare site, managed by the Langholm Initiative, is a remarkable example of community-led landscape restoration, balancing biodiversity conservation with sustainable land use.



Our visit began at Lower Tarras, where we learned about the impact of Storm Arwen, which caused significant wind damage, affecting around 25% of the sitka spruce forestry plantation. The affected trees were felled last year, creating both challenges and opportunities for regeneration. The community has played a key role in shaping the reserve's future, working with landscape architects to design new features such as ponds, created using natural hill water and the removal of artificial culverts. A network of figure-of-eight walking paths has also been established, enhancing visitor access and engagement with the landscape. The Reserve has reached an agreement with Scottish Forestry for re-establishing native woodland through natural regeneration. Native species are already beginning to return, and trees from the tree nursery are set to be planted to further enhance biodiversity. The team is also closely monitoring deer populations and may consider controlled stalking to manage their impact on the regenerating woodland.



At Broomholmshields and Longwood, we saw how careful woodland management is helping to shape the future of the reserve. Lunch at Longwood provided an opportunity to reflect on the need for strategic thinning, particularly of birch, and how future grazing practices could be used to support the development of a diverse and resilient oak woodland. We also sampled a fabulous lunch courtesy of a local business, Castle View Catering.

A highlight of the visit was viewing the reserve's Special Protection Area (SPA) and witnessing ongoing peatland restoration efforts, as well as managing their designation. At Middle Moss Head, innovative techniques such as 'zip' and 'wave' damming are being used to block artificial drainage channels, helping to restore the natural hydrology of the peatland. The positive impact of these measures is already evident, though the rapid natural regeneration of the site presents both opportunities and challenges.

Beyond the insightful site visits, the exchange provided a fantastic opportunity for CWA members to connect, share experiences, and discuss the challenges and successes within their own community woodlands. Conversations throughout the trip sparked new ideas and strengthened our collective knowledge, highlighting the importance of peer learning and collaboration. We all left feeling inspired and motivated, eager to implement the insights gained and continue fostering resilient and thriving woodlands in our own communities.

Throughout the visit, it was clear that the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve is a landscape in transformation - one that showcases the power of community-driven conservation. The work being carried out here serves as an inspiring model for other community woodland groups, demonstrating how local stewardship can lead to meaningful environmental restoration and sustainable land management.



We were delighted to host a study day for members of the CWA to discuss with the development of the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve and the importance of our woodlands on the reserve. These study days are so beneficial for both host and visitors as it gives an opportunity to discuss such a range of issues and get honest feedback on the work we are doing as well as get the benefit of such a wide range of experience. Taking time out to go on visits such as these can often seem a huge undertaking when there are so many competing priorities but they are so worthwhile.

Angela Williams, Development Manager at the Langholm Initiative

We were joined by representatives from Craigiels Community Woodland, Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust, Leadburn Community Woodland as well as staff and trustees of the CWA and other individual members.

After a presentation on our work we headed out on site to look at a range of woodland projects we are working on and had a wide range of discussions including work on designated sites, income generation and more. So, if you get the chance to go on a visit – do take it!



CWA would like to thank our hosts for sharing their knowledge and experiences with us and thank the Community Learning Exchange for funding this event.



Three-Site Exchange Visit: Learning and Sharing Across West Lothian's Community Woodlands

Sharon Smith. CWA



On Wednesday, 12th February 2025, the Community Woodlands Association organised a three-site exchange visit, bringing together woodland managers, woodland employees, Trustees, partner group representatives and other community woodland group members to share experiences, challenges, and ideas. This was a fantastic opportunity to see first-hand the incredible work being done at three community-led woodland and environmental projects in West Lothian: Community Woods and Garden Polbeth & West Calder, Easter Breich Wood, and Beechbrae.

Our first stop was Community Woods and Garden. Polbeth and West Calder, nestled between the main railline to Glasgow and the A71, where we were welcomed with an inspiring tour of the site's recent developments.

The new polytunnels and outdoor vegetable beds mean they can now grow food most of the year round, and we heard how the Dandelion Project has been a great way to get the community involved in local food production. Sustainability is a big focus here, with on-site composting, supported by The Conservation Volunteers and a youth initiative, helping to keep things green.

One of the key takeaways from this visit was the importance of forward planning. They're currently developing a woodland management plan to help secure funding and guide their activities, rather than reacting to issues as they arise. They hope to transform the fairy garden into a musical woodland area, to increase community engagement. The group also showed us their renewable energy solutions, including wood pellet heaters and solar panels, and shared exciting plans for enhancing biodiversity, including a proposed pond and potential further development of their shale walk and fungi walk.

This was a great opportunity for us to share with our CWA friends the work we are doing here to support our community and to ensure the sustainability of the garden and woodland. We had a lovely day together and we look forward to participating in similar activities in the future.

Community Woods and Garden Polbeth and West Calder



Next, we headed to **Easter Breich Wood**, a community woodland acquired in 2022 with Scottish Land Fund support. Spanning 80 hectares, it's a huge space with so much potential.

We learned about the ongoing work to improve accessibility, including plans to create parking for disabled visitors. Regular community-led maintenance days help keep the woodland in good condition, with volunteers involved in hedge trimming, path clearing, and seasonal scything.

A particularly exciting aspect of Easter Breich is its biodiversity work. The **Lothian Amphibian and Reptile Group** has confirmed the site's pond is capable of supporting wildlife, which has led to a grant to examine ways to further enhance the habitat. Other improvements include culvert and drainage work to ensure the paths remain accessible year-round, and the group have received invaluable support from **Paths for All** for training, advice and equipment. Being part of the **West Lothian Shale Trail**, which links West Calder to Winchburgh, Easter Breich is also a key connector in the wider landscape, and discussions are ongoing with the local council about long-term maintenance and support of the Shale Trail part of the wood.



I was absolutely delighted to welcome the group to our wood where I shared the history of the wood and how it came to be in community ownership.

Even though the weather was pretty dreich I was able to show the group the beauty of our wood including the pond, the confluence of the Breich Water and River Almond and we sat down and appreciated the view of the Five Sisters national monument from the bench provided by a grant from West Lothian Climate Action Network

We discussed the range of activities in the wood both educational and maintenance of the wood and the challenges posed whilst celebrating the health and wellbeing opportunities for our community.

Thank you to all the group I think that we have made some excellent and enduring contacts from the visit.

Norman Lannigan, Easter Breich Wood Trustee



The final stop of the day was **Beechbrae**, an innovative woodland project with a strong focus on environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

Over the last 13 years Beechbrae has evolved into a well-loved space with an orchard, ponds, growing initiatives, and essential infrastructure like storage containers and polytunnels. Beechbrae also has its own Woodland Centre that is hired out by groups as a space to come together and improve wellbeing.

Beechbrae is a real leader in using woodlands for mental and physical wellbeing. Their Branching Out programme supports struggling with mental health by connecting with nature. They also support young people who aren't engaging in school in Woodland Wellbeing programmes. However, like many community projects, they're facing funding challenges and continue to look for innovative ways to fund the work they do. Sustainability remains at the heart of Beechbrae's ethos, and is central to their woodland management, addressing the impact of ash dieback while maintaining a rich mix of wild apple, birch, and other native species.

Throughout the day, we were struck by the passion, creativity, and resilience of everyone involved in these projects. The exchange visit wasn't just about learning from each site, it was about strengthening connections, sharing practical ideas, and inspiring each other to keep pushing forward. It's clear that community-led woodlands are more than just green spaces; they're hubs for social interaction, education, and wellbeing. This visit reaffirmed the importance of supporting and celebrating these spaces, ensuring they continue to thrive for future generations.



It was great to welcome folks to Beechbrae from a variety of CWA groups, some local to West Lothian and a few from further away. We really value and benefit from sharing our experiences and hearing from others, especially groups focusing on wellbeing in woodlands. We're grateful to share in this exchange.

Ally Graham, Beechbrae

CWA would like to thank all community woodland groups for embracing this opportunity to share their knowledge and to welcome members from other groups to their woodlands. We would also like to thank the **Community Learning Exchange** who has financially supported this event.

**scottish
community
alliance**

Upcoming Learning Exchange - Dronley Community Woodland

Saturday 15th March. 10am - 4pm

You've read about it... now experience it for yourself!



Here's a chance for all **CWA Members** to take part in a learning exchange, this time at **Dronley Community Woodland**, Dundee. Hear from Dirk Sporleder, the Woodland Manager, who will share lots of information about working the woodland in line with Continuous Cover Forestry principles.

More about Dronley Community Woodland:

- became a community woodland group in 2019
- is managed according to Continuous Cover Forestry Principles
- short-term woodland management aim is to regenerate the wood by encouraging natural regeneration, under-planting and direct seeding (under the existing canopy)
- long-term woodland management vision: transform the existing woodland towards a diverse, stable, resilient, permanent irregular mixed wood for the benefit of future generations
- committed to establishing a strong connection between the local community and offer training, research, cooperation, education, and local employment opportunities, and with a strong volunteer support network



There is no charge for attending this exchange visit. Additionally, all CWA members have access to the Scottish Community Alliance Community Learning Exchange Funding, which support travel costs, accommodation and sustenance associated with the visit. Early applicants will receive their funding in advance.



Nothing to lose and a lot to gain! Find out more and apply for a place now.

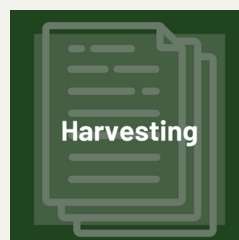
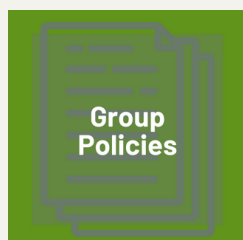


New Templates Added to Website

We have recently added 2 tender documents to our growing library of templates:

- an example invitation to tender - thanks to the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest (ASR) for sharing this
- an Invitation to tender template - this Word document can be downloaded and adapted to your requirements

Don't forget to check out the Templates in the other sections.



Visit the website: Templates (and other useful forms and guidance)

Help Protect Scotland's Red Squirrels: Get Involved in Conservation Across the Eastern Lowlands!

Hollie Sutherland. Project Coordinator.

Eastern Lowlands Red Squirrel Group - covering the Kingdom of Fife, Clackmannanshire and parts of Perth and Kinross and Stirling



Are you passionate about Scotland's native wildlife? Does your community woodland group want to play a hands-on role in protecting one of our most iconic species—the red squirrel? The Eastern Lowlands Red Squirrel Group (ELRSG) is calling on members and groups of the Community Woodlands Association to join us in our mission to conserve red squirrels across Fife, Clackmannanshire, Kinross, and parts of south Perth and east Stirling.

Why Red Squirrel Conservation Matters

Red squirrels are an essential part of Scotland's natural heritage. However, they are under serious threat from habitat loss and competition from non-native grey squirrels. With your help, we can ensure that red squirrels continue to thrive in Scotland's woodlands.

We are looking for community woodland groups and individuals who are interested in monitoring red squirrel populations and contributing to practical conservation efforts. Whether you want to be out in the field or work from home, there's a role for everyone!

Volunteer Opportunities - Here are some of the ways you can get involved:

Survey and Monitoring

1. Report Squirrel Sightings:

If you see red or grey squirrels, please report your sightings on the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website. Every sighting provides valuable data that helps us plan our projects.

2. Adopt-a-Woodland:

Love exploring your local woodlands? By adopting a woodland, you can help us monitor squirrel populations during your regular walks. Simply record your sightings—or even your non-sightings—on our Adopt-a-Woodland form. Every walk counts, and you'll play a key role in tracking squirrel activity across the region.

3. Walked Transect Surveys:

For the early risers! Walked transects take place in spring and autumn, just after sunrise. These structured surveys provide detailed data on squirrel populations. Training is provided, so if you're interested, let us know!

4. Feeder Box and Camera Trap Monitoring:

Want to get more involved in in-depth monitoring? This method uses feeder boxes and camera traps to track squirrel activity. It requires more time and effort, but we'll provide free training and equipment.



5. Grey Squirrel Removal

Grey squirrels are the primary threat to our native reds, and their removal is critical to red squirrel conservation.

Pest Control Support: If you have experience in pest control or would like to receive training, we urgently need your help in removing grey squirrels in targeted areas where we have permission to access.

Trap Checking: You can assist with checking traps without requiring dispatch training. Upon a capture, you'd notify a local grey squirrel control volunteer to handle the rest.

Data Management

Prefer to work from home? We have a range of data management tasks that need your help, including digitizing handwritten data and formatting digital records. Training will be provided for all tasks.

Free Training and Support

No matter the role you choose, ELRSG offers free one-to-one or group training and provides all necessary equipment. This ensures you feel confident and prepared to make a difference for red squirrels in your local area.

Get in Touch

Interested in joining the effort to protect Scotland's red squirrels? We'd love to hear from you! Whether you're an individual volunteer or a member of a community woodland group, there's a way for you to get involved.

Contact Hollie Sutherland, Project Coordinator, at elredsquirrelgroup@gmail.com to learn more or sign up for a role.

Together, we can create a brighter future for red squirrels in the Eastern Lowlands. Join us in making a difference for one of Scotland's most beloved species!

ELRSG is funded by the Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund development grant, managed by NatureScot, the Red Squirrel Survival Trust and others.



Scotland's Finest Woods Awards returns for 2025

Enter now! Enter now! Enter now! Enter now! Enter now!



Jean Nairn, Executive Director of Scotland's Finest Woods, said: "It is wonderful to be planning for our 40th anniversary awards ceremony.

"Scotland's Finest Woods brings together brilliant work, from farms and forestry to local woods and schools. We are excited for this year's entries, building on what has been a superb array of best practice woodland management and creation over the last four decades.

"Winners enjoy recognition and publicity for their hard work and care of trees and receive a cash prize in addition to the trophies on offer. If they are visited by judges, this is often a very worthwhile and inspiring experience for all involved. Will you enter your project this year and be in with the chance of winning?"

There are 11 competitions at this year's Scotland's Finest Woods Awards, 2 of which are for **Community Woodlands**:

- small community woodland group
- large community woodland group

[Find out more about the Community Woodland awards](#)

A new Urban Forestry Award, sponsored by Future Woodlands Scotland is all about celebrating the projects that are turning towns and cities into greener, healthier and more sustainable places to live.

Awards also include: Quality Timber, Farm Woodland, New Native Wood, Schools and Early Years, and Climate Change.



In 2024 CWA Members, **Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust for Dùn Coilich, Perthshire** won both, the **Large Community Woodland Group Award** and the **Tim Stead trophy** for overall Community Woodland .

Enter now

- **Schools and Early Years** entries must be made by 23:59 on **Monday March 31, 2025**.
- **All other entries** must be submitted by 23:59 on **Saturday May 31, 2025**.

For full details, criteria and entry forms see: www.sfwa.co.uk

A glittering awards ceremony will take place in **November** when there will be the added chance to celebrate **National Tree Week** (22-30 November 2025).

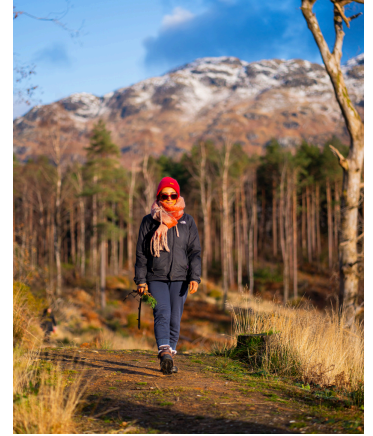
Woodape* : A Love for Woodlands, Community, and Belonging

Satya Dunning

*My friend Alison Spurway, Chair of the Children's Wood, and I came up with this word based on the word "agape"

Growing up mixed-race in Dakar, Senegal, I have always navigated questions of identity and belonging. Living in a country where I was seen as "toubab" (white), "not white but not black" and later in the UK, as Black followed quickly by the question "where are you from"?

I am mixed race: European, African and Asian. My mother tongue, French, felt foreign even as a child, perhaps because of its colonial roots, perhaps because it was not even my parents' mother tongues. English, too, remains a language I speak without intimacy. Over the years, I have found that my true language is movement - moving through nature, especially woodlands, where I feel most at home.



My freelance movement work is deeply inspired by this connection to nature and my belief in agape — universal love that extends beyond close relationships to the wider community.

The concept of "woodape," or love for woodlands, embodies this. Woodlands offer space, inspiration, learning, connections and belonging, especially in urban spaces where children and communities benefit from green spaces for their health and wellbeing. My wish for Glasgow and every town in Scotland is for the presence and preservation of woodland spaces that are safe, cared for, loved, and inviting connections with all members of its surrounding community.



Reciprocity is essential. Acts of agape matter because they mirror how we should care for nature. Examples of agape I have come across are the woman in Glasgow's Southside who cooks for her community, fighting for the rights to a Children's Woods, singing to newly planted trees, or picking up litter with Friends of the River Kelvin.

After losing my mother at 16, I felt lost until I found the ground beneath my feet, a quiet joy, peace and acceptance in nature, amongst trees.

As I plan for 2026, I would love to engage more global majority people in woodlands. I welcome collaborations to build inclusive, caring spaces where both community and nature thrive. Woodape is a call to action, an invitation to dare, to care, to co create, be curious, to reach out in love and kindness to each other and the (wood) land.

Photos: SISU and Rumin Studios

Satya Dunning is Secretary of Being Mixed, Facilitator and Healing Diets Nutritional Consultant based in Glasgow. For more information about Satya Dunning, visit Stepping into Life.

If you are an organisation interested in developing a project with Satya, please email: satya@steppingintolife.co.uk . Phone: 07981927335

Partnership Agreement between Lyme Resource Centre (LRC) and CWA

Norman Lannigan, LRC



CWA and the LRC are delighted to announce a partnership agreement. LRC and CWA share an ambition to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors and specifically community woodlands safely. This includes people being aware of and protecting themselves from the risk of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

LRC and CWA will work together to ensure that community woodland group members and the public who enjoy the woods are better protected from tick borne diseases by

- Raising awareness of ticks and tick-borne disease.
- Improving understanding of prevention of tick bites
- Providing information on detecting tick bites and techniques for the safe removal of attached ticks
- Educating the public about the early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease and the action they should take to seek appropriate care

The aims of the partnership will be achieved by the CWA and LRC working together through the provision of LRC developed resources, free of charge, to member community woodlands for local use best suited to their circumstances.

We are delighted to have formed this partnership which we hope will be the first of many with groups who share our ambition of enabling enjoyment of the outdoors whilst protecting the public from the threat of ticks and tick-borne disease. We know that 22% of people who responded to our patient survey and who were diagnosed with Lyme disease recall their tick bite following a walk in woodlands so this partnership is particularly important.

LRC Resources

LRC hope shortly to produce a set of signs which will include the CWA logo.

All LRC resources are available, **free of charge** and can be ordered via the LRC website:

- [Available resources can be found here](#)
- [Resources can be ordered here](#)

[Visit the Lyme Resource Centre Website](#)



CWA Secures People's Postcode Lottery Award



CWA is delighted to confirm that we secured grant support from the Postcode Trust during their most recent round of awards. The grant of £25,000 is unrestricted and to be spent by the end of the coming financial year 2025-26. We will use this kind support to increase our capacity to deliver for community woodland groups across Scotland, with some small items of equipment, updating our IT systems and some additional staff time so that we are better able to support the community woodland movement.

Grateful thanks to the Post Code Trust for their generous support.