

28 June Progress up date and discussion on Stage 2 Activity Plan for Evanton Wood.

Attendance: 17

Participants were asked to evaluate 3 key themes – **access, woodland management and education and training skills**, by looking at **barriers** (what is stopping activities under this theme reaching their potential?); **overcoming these barriers** (what could be done to remove these barriers?); **opportunities** (realistic and practical opportunities related to the theme that could be linked to the Woods) and **realistic targets over the next 5 years** (who, how many, what benefits?).

The groups created the matrixes below for each theme.

Theme 1 Access

Barriers	Opportunities
<p><i>Physical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of facilities (eg. picnic areas, toilets) • Muddy paths in need of repair / streams running over paths • Not knowing how to access woods (lots of different access points) • Difficult to locate features – eg. pond/gorge • Very limited signage or waymarking • Roads not suitable for pushchairs or disabled access. • Dog mess on paths • Very limited car parking /disabled car parking • No facilities for young people • Access issues during harvesting operations. <p><i>Intellectual</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough awareness of the woods amongst local people or tourists • Fear of getting lost in woods/ safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building at cross-roads (wooden) • Working with caravan park to promote and provide toilets (note also toilet provision at the DJ Hall) • Installing view points with seats/signs • Creating pond feature • Bird hides • Picnic/ BBQ areas/ seating • Musical events – performance area/stage/band stand – involve local musicians • Red squirrel project • Mountain biking facilities • Getting forest schools involved • Running guided walks and special holiday events (eg. Easter, mid-summer, Halloween) • Promotion to local people/ visitors (esp. Caravan park visitors). • Harry Potter connection for promotion
Overcoming barriers	Realistic targets
<p><i>Physical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signage into woods and of features within woods • Boardwalks for disabled/pushchair access • Seating • Doggy bins (issue of who empties) or ‘stick and flick’ campaign • Development at Gorge or view points (issues of land ownership/locations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create disabled access – short term create access to cross-roads and longer term target of loop around woods. • Run a red squirrel project – survey, improving habitats • Create pond feature • Create mountain bike trail • Link woodland paths to wider path network locally to give greater choice of routes/trails • Install signage for access and subtle

Intellectual

- Better advertising to local people/visitors

- waymarking in woods
- Install interpretation/ orientation at crossroads (perhaps in wooden building/shelter)
- Interpretation/orientation in village, caravan park, car-park
- Promotional leaflet (to make visitors more aware)
- Leaflet dispenser in woods with donation box
- Hold 6 guided walks per year
- Increase visitor numbers (note – need baseline – use people counters – suggested locations Chapel and Camden street entrances, track by well)
- Tactile interpretation for disabled visitors.

Theme 2 Woodland management

Barriers

- Lack of understanding of woodland management issues
- Accessibility for extraction
- Availability of local labour and equipment
- Decision on style of extractions – large contractor/local contractor
- Co-ordination of work on wood
- How to make choice of mix of trees
- Ethos of contractor – community may prefer low impact felling – not too much mess
- Litter

Opportunities

- Increasing volunteer skills
- Firewood production
- Employing local labour
- Non timber products/ crafts eg. wreaths
- Chipping waste for resale
- Big diameter Douglas Fir and Larch sale for specialist use
- Garden furniture from greenwood
- Timber sales – Balcas or local sawmill
- Using horses
- Team Building
- Lease options?
- Adventure activities
- Bushcraft
- Use for western hemlock?
- Increase biodiversity
- Woodland garden

Overcoming barriers

- Capacity building visits to other community woodlands
- Guided walks
- Volunteer days
- Woodland Management talks and walks
- Newsletters
- Information/interpretation in woods about

Realistic targets

- More volunteer days – 6+ per year
- 10-20 participants per day
- Training for 4-6 volunteers for basic chain saw course
- Firewood sales – 50 tonnes
- Wood store – for drying wood
- Income generation – comparative

the activity in wood.

- Employing forestry consultant
- Invest in tools and machinery.

pricing of local contractors versus big contractors

- What do we want the wood to look like in 50 year?
- Research and build-up market for specialist timber
- Secure workshop/store
- Timber production, amenity and biodiversity – change priority depending on site.

Theme 3 Education and training skills

Barriers

- Toilet facilities are important
- All abilities track(s)
- Wet patches
- Personnel/ Health & Safety/ First Aid
- Expense of training
- Making it cool for youth
- Problems of vandalism (eg. the well)
- Need critical mass for types of training eg. chainsaw
- Economic climate – no jobs.

Opportunities

- Local schools/ playgroups
- Forest schools – train people
- Youth groups- camping eg. Scouts creating bivies – undertaking wild games in the woods.
- Informal education
- Secondary schools: environment, art, curriculum for excellence, eco projects (eg. prizes from Sepa)
- Sport: mountain biking, mini orienteering, cross-country running (trail bikers?)
- Vocational training – path buildings, chainsaw, cabin-building, furniture.
- BTCV and other groups – green gym
- Flora and fauna inc. fungus – regular walks and talks
- School of forestry training
- New technology (smart) – not compulsory!
- Biological
- Interpretation – eg. leaflets, signage in the village
- Suitable place for courses – eg. Outdoor Management Development, Team Building
- Caravan Park users (check numbers)
- Art projects
- Community Woods Network
- Offering the wood as an opportunity – eg. continuous cover.

Overcoming barriers

- Use Jubilee Hall toilets in the interim
- Use of volunteers eg. forest schools
- Good information to groups –

Realistic targets

- Greater involvement of schools (eg. Dingwall/ Alness) and youth groups (eg. Scouts)

printed/website

- Midsummer rave/hoolie
 - Caravan Park facilities
 - Own toilet facilities
 - Cabin – simple roofed structure (could be open sided)
 - Building a relationship with schools
 - More scope for small level woodland jobs
 - Offering wood in return for labour
- Practical woodland management skills
 - School of forestry – regular part of curriculum
 - Primary schools spending certain number of days in the woods – looking at themes such as woodland, water, play & discovery etc.
 - Special needs - St Clements/ Isobel Rhind Centre
 - Monthly green gym
 - Approaching training providers (eg. specialists like John Miller)
 - Weight watchers
 - Looking at a forest school base