

**Evanton Wood – Activity Plan**  
*People, Participation and Learning*

**Evanton Wood Community Company**  
**Heritage Lottery Fund**  
**Heritage and Biodiversity Project**  
**November 2011**



# Evanton Wood – Activity Plan

## People, Participation and Learning

### Evanton Wood Community Company November 2011

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Evanton Wood Community Company (EWCC) are seeking support from the HLF to help them acquire and manage a 64 hectare wood and deliver real benefits to people living in and visiting Evanton. This project will involve many people directly in the management of the wood, will enhance the woodland biodiversity and will help people to learn from it.
2. The total cost of the project is £441k including purchase of the woodland at £300k (recently valued at £335k). The balance of £141k is to make improvements to the wood as requested by the community, to enhance biodiversity and to support learning and participation activities. EWCC are requesting an intervention rate of 68% be considered. Matching funding for the project is being provided by community benefit funding from a local wind farm, the Highland Council and other sources. Volunteers and others will contribute in kind to projects hence the actual intervention rate may be less and the HLF leverage improved.
3. The EWCC is a charitable company limited by guarantee and with management by an elected board of 8 Directors drawn from its 70 paid up members. Within the community are other supporters and volunteers.
4. This mature mixed age wood, mainly conifer with beech, birch and some other broadleaves, has been managed under a system of continuous cover for over 100 years. The wood, which is much loved by local residents, is right next to the growing village of Evanton (pop.1600) in East Ross 16 miles north of Inverness. The wood has an unusual history in that it was planned by Sir William Schlich a 'father figure' in international forestry and Oxford University's first forestry professor. More recently the wood featured in a Harry Potter film.
5. Novar Estate has owned the wood for over 150 years. They no longer believe it fits with their management goals and have offered it for sale to the Evanton community through the EWCC. If this is not successful it will be placed on the open market.
6. In preparing their Stage 2 HLF application the EWCC has carried out a consultation programme in their community, collecting the views of almost 150 people, and received letters of support from important community stakeholders including the primary head teacher and leaders of Evanton Youth Enterprise, the Scouts and Guides, Step It Up Highland and others. More than 12 activities in the wood have been trialled and evaluated over the past 18 months.
7. The EWCC Directors have met with woodland and biodiversity specialists, visited other community woodland projects and attended the national Community Woodland Association conference to develop their understanding, skills and contacts. A woodland management plan for the site has been prepared by a professional forester and Directors have undertaken access audits on the path network.
8. Informed by their community consultation the EWCC proposes the following broad outcomes for this HLF supported project:
  - The wood will remain a special place for people and wildlife (something that could not be guaranteed under private ownership);
  - The wood will be increasingly recognised both for its trees and its biodiversity as both flourish and increase;

- The woodland will offer increased low-key informal recreational opportunities for everyone to enjoy;
  - There will be improving knowledge within the community derived from a woodland learning environment;
  - Our woodland heritage will be well cared for, with volunteers participating in many woodland management operations;
  - The wood will be part of a network of habitats and village paths linking people with woodland places in Ross-shire
  - It is envisaged that the whole project will serve to bring together and strengthen the local community.
9. This Activity Plan contains the actions that are required to achieve these outcomes. In summary the EWCC are requesting funding to:
- Repair and reconstruct as required 560 metres of paths – including an all ability section
  - Construct a pond in an existing wetland area, and carry out other measures to improve habitat, including planting native trees to increase biodiversity
  - Install welcome signs and interpretation panels, expand the website and prepare leaflets
  - Deliver a family orientated events programme in the wood
  - Support and train volunteers to carry out woodland management tasks
  - Facilitate education and learning activities in the wood
  - Survey and record biodiversity in the wood
  - Provide people with the skills needed to establish a sustainable firewood project.
10. In summary this project will deliver by year 5:
- Around 120 volunteer woodland work half-days pa (c.600 in total)
  - Up to 5 family oriented events per annum (25 in total) with projected participation of c 220 pa = 1100)
  - 5 Youth Meets pa (25 in total)
  - Up to 10 educational visits per annum (c 1000 pupils)
  - Over 100 attendances at walks and talks pa (c 580 in total)
  - Around 60 training opportunities with over 600 person hours
  - Around 200 people participating in educational/learning activities per annum (1000 in total)
  - 85% of respondents saying the overall experience of woodland events was good or very good
  - Over 2000 native trees and shrubs planted in the wood
  - A low carbon, sustainable fuel source

Furthermore our project will:

- Place 64 hectares of village door step heritage forest into community ownership
- Develop a high quality educational resource pack that will increase young people's understanding of their woodland heritage
- Develop a central resource (website and own noticeboard) that provides information about the wood and that will help promote and co-ordinate all onsite activities and events

Other non-quantifiable aims of our project are to:

- Offer access to all potential users to maximise use of the wood's unique environment – its natural and forest heritage
- Provide high quality access to information about the natural and forest heritage
- Develop training and educational opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and interests
- Increase local pride and interest in the wood's important forest history and heritage.

## **SECTION 1 - WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

### **1.1 Our organisation**

- 1.1.1 This Activity Plan was prepared to support a bid from the Evanton Wood Community Company (EWCC) 2011 to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the purchase and subsequent management of Evanton Wood.
- 1.1.2 The EWCC (no. 332678) was formed in October 2007, following a public meeting, with the objective of acquiring and managing Evanton Wood (the wood) on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the local community. Evanton Wood is part of the community's heritage. We have 70 paid up members, plus other supporters, principally people living within the local postcode district IV16. Associate membership is open to those from outwith the area and we also have a youth membership rate.
- 1.1.3 Our Memorandum and Articles of Association are based on a model provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise developed for use in forming a community body as defined by Part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The company successfully registered under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 as of 12 November 2008. We have charitable status as of 2011 (SCO 042025).

### **1.2 Our commitment**

Our objective is community ownership of Evanton Wood, so involving people is inherent in our aims.

- 1.2.1 Our commitment to involving people in the wood has been demonstrated by the programme of 13 trial events we have held in and around the wood over the past 18 months. These were advertised to people in the community through posters, leaflets, word of mouth and on our website. EWCC Directors and other supporters gave freely of their time and energy to make things happen. The events programme has been successful; has heightened public interest in the woods, and promoted the ambition of community ownership.
- 1.2.2 We have engaged with our members and others through public meetings, regular communications on our website, newsletters, word of mouth, information stalls in the local Co-op store, a display on our village notice board and by presentations to the community council.
- 1.2.3 We carried out a community survey, interviewing around 90 people on their views about the wood and its future. This followed on from a community survey undertaken when the company was formed, which showed strong popular interest in the idea of the community purchasing the wood. (This evidence was required by the Land Reform Act process when a right to buy approach was considered.)
- 1.2.4 Trial events in 2010 began with egg painting sessions, followed by an Easter Event which drew in a sizable number of people from the village and further afield. These two events were repeated in 2011. (Both Easter Events attracted around 60 people and 30 came to our egg painting sessions). In 2010 we also held an acoustic music event and a sponsored walk and cycle which raised £500.
- 1.2.5 In 2011 we organised three volunteer events resulting in 48 volunteers days spent working in the woods. Two guided walks were held in 2010 with more in 2011 and two dawn chorus walks. We consider these numbers to be good for a small village

the size of Evanton and demonstrate the community is keen to be involved in the wood.

- 1.2.6 In running these trial events and activities, and in talking to specialists, we have learnt about effective ways of working eg. the value of on-site pre-meetings, effective ways of gaining feed-back, the best way of conducting biological surveys (at different times of the year) and the resources and manpower required to run community events. These lessons will inform our 5 Year activity plan.

### **1.3 Changes from Stage 1**

- 1.3.1 This Activity Plan builds on the considerable supporting evidence we collected for our Stage 1 bid (2010), as well as information we have gathered since, providing a soundly thought out basis for our Stage 2 application.

- 1.3.2 For the 2010 Stage 1 bid, we provided a number of documents and consultations that are still of direct relevance to our Activity Plan including:

- Evanton Wood Management Plan;
- EWCC Business Plan

- 1.3.3 Since Stage 1 there has been only limited change to the internal or external issues affecting the wood, therefore our earlier work remains highly relevant to Stage 2. However we wish the following additional information to be noted.

#### External

- Adoption of Core Path Plan by Highland Council September 2011

#### Internal

- Clarification of EWCC aims and outcomes August 2011
- Community Consultation Exercises October 2010, February 2011, June 2011
- Addendum to the Woodland Management Plan October 2011
- A range of other policies and plans prepared for Stage 2
- Feed-back from visits to other community woodlands
- Feed-back from volunteer activity days

- 1.3.4 While developing our Stage 2 application we have looked again at the specific activities proposed in earlier plans and during the community consultation exercises. Some are still as we proposed in Stage 1, but others have been changed and new activities have been added. Our Stage 2 budget has increased by approximately 15 per cent because we have added more realistic costs, and refocused our educational, biodiversity and volunteer activities following advice from HLF staff and our mentor. The asking price for the wood also increased by £5k (see letter from Novar).

- 1.3.5 A key change to our strategy is that we have realised that the availability of Directors and other volunteers to organise and run planned events can vary. People may be away or not be able to commit the necessary time to coordinate an event programme. Consequently, we have applied to the Robertson Trust for funding to support an Education and Outreach Coordinator to help with our work (see section 4.8 for more details).

1.3.6 Volunteers and others will contribute in kind to our proposed projects hence the actual HLF intervention rate may be less and the HLF leverage improved. We are not able to predict exactly the extent of additional support at this stage.

#### **1.4 People's relationship with the heritage**

1.4.1 Evanton Wood, located in East Ross, comprises 64 hectares of planned woodland dating from the late 19th century. The wood provides the northern backdrop to the village of Evanton, which was laid out in 1807 as a planned settlement, although most development dates from the Victorian period. Designed on an unusual triangular grid, Evanton has since developed along the B817 in a more dispersed layout, and there are larger dwellings along Swordale Road, backing onto the wood.

1.4.2 People have enjoyed access to the wood for many years and it is an important informal recreation area for the village generating, perhaps, an average of 30 daily visits right throughout the year. The wood also provides access to the unique feature that is the Black Rock Gorge, a spectacular narrow ravine that in 2004 was a location for the film "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire".

1.4.3 The wood has a Gaelic heritage with place names such as Clach a' Cholumain, Loch an t'Saighdear, Pol Lucais and Creag Ruadh.

1.4.4 We are aware, too, of a rich trove of memories and tales of how older people in the community worked in and used the woods in their youth.

1.4.5 Professional foresters regard the wood as one of the outstanding examples of continuous cover forestry in Scotland. In many respects it represents the type of woodland that the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 aspires to create, with its wide range of species and age classes creating an environment that is visually pleasing, and that it has a higher biodiversity value than a conventional coniferous plantation.

1.4.6 People have benefited from the continuous cover approach used in the wood for many generations but two principal factors give this wood particularly unusual heritage.

- The wood has a unique connection to the early years of professional forestry training and the implementation of systematic forest management in the United Kingdom and it is one of only a few examples where continuous cover forestry techniques have been applied over a prolonged period.
- The present structure of the woodland is a result of the forest design principles implemented by Professor Sir William Schlich, a 'father figure' in international forestry and first professor of forestry at Oxford University, who prepared the first written plan for the woodlands in 1899.

1.4.7 The history of the wood is not well known by people in Evanton, particularly the involvement of Professor Schlich. The importance of the wood as an example of continuous cover forestry, where trees are thinned rather than clear felled, is recognised by the forestry fraternity, but again is not generally well known in the village.

1.4.8 The wood is a valuable local setting for both people and wildlife. European protected species that are known to occur within or to frequent the wood include otter and common pipistrelle bats. (Our recent Ranger led bat walk identified 3 Pip45s within the perimeter of the wood). Less common Scottish wildcat and Natterers bats may

occur in the wood. Red squirrels, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) Species, and pine marten are resident in the wood; badgers may also be present.

1.4.9 During a breeding bird survey we have recorded twenty bird species so far including song thrush and spotted fly catcher – UK BAP red listed species. Other iconic species – Scottish crossbill, crested tit, capercaillie and goshawk occur in the neighbouring Novar Special Protection Area and may use the wood from time to time. A range of invertebrates have been recorded and many more await discovery. A recent moth netting activity identified the following: Feathered Thorn, Chestnuts, November moth, pale November moth along with various Micro moths, and a water boatman.

## **1.5 Our Activity Plan**

1.5.1 Our Activity Plan is a live document, and will be updated and developed as our project moves forward. It is our formal statement of intent i.e. the activities that we will deliver with the help of HLF funding. Our Plan objectives will, therefore, not be altered without prior discussion with HLF.

1.5.2 Unless clearly specified otherwise, our use of the term Evanton Wood throughout this document refers to the area of woodland we are being offered for sale by Novar Estate. Our Plan presents the required information and analysis requested by HLF in its “Planning activities in heritage projects” guide (numbering may be different).

1.5.3 In creating our activity plan, we have drawn on our experience of running events in the wood, our public meetings and community survey, our visits to other community woodlands, and input from various specialists and conservation organisations.

1.5.4 Most ideas for activities came from within the EWCC Board with help from forester Cameron Ross who wrote the Woodland Management Plan. We also visited other community woodlands and learned, among other things, about a successful firewood project, and about some different types of community woodland buildings used by schools and other community organisations. We attended the Community Woodland Association Annual Conference in 2010 and 2011.

1.5.5 The themes in our Activity Plan, completed by the EWCC Board facilitated by Bryden Associates (in conjunction with Rowantree Consulting) were developed through a discursive process with community stakeholders that involved all the evidence and feedback gathered over several years prior to this application.

## **2 Audiences**

### **2.1 About our audiences**

2.1.1 Our principal audience is the local community of all ages, but we are also keen to involve people from further afield. People living in Evanton increasingly commute elsewhere to work. This presents a challenge to the social fabric of the village, with some residents becoming more divorced from the community and its heritage. We believe that woodland ownership and associated activities in the wood offer an opportunity to bring together the community around a project for everyone’s benefit.

2.1.2 Inverness is 16 miles away, and Aness and Dingwall are 4 and 6 miles away respectively. There are 671 households and 1678 inhabitants in the Evanton settlement ‘zone’ which includes a scattered hinterland up Glen Glass. Evanton, the

village, has 1105 inhabitants. The population in both cases is growing steadily, and the 1990s saw a moderate increase of 8.12% for the 'zone', rising from 1552 to 1678; and 10.72% for the settlement on its own, rising from 998 to 1105.

- 2.1.3 Evanton has a primary school (150 pupils including the Nursery). Secondary school age pupils are bussed to Alness Academy. A small number of pupils choose to attend Dingwall Academy or Invergordon Academy.
- 2.1.4 We are likely to see growth in the population of Evanton in the future. Large new housing allocations are identified to the south west and the north east of the village at Teandallon (180 units) and Culcairn (85 units). A bigger school and other facilities will be required. Smaller infill housing allocations, such as at Knockrash, have also been identified. The nearby large industrial estate of Highland Deephaven, a RAF base until the 1970s, has extensive development potential.
- 2.1.5 The area around Evanton has a dispersed rural population, many of whom are dependent on private car transport to access their everyday services. Buses connect Evanton with Inverness and the nearest train station is in Alness. The Highland Council supports the development of a new rail halt and associated parking at Evanton in the future.
- 2.1.6 The wood currently attracts people from all sectors of our community. The wood is regarded by local residents and visitors as a key asset in our local area. A list of organisations and groups that currently use the wood is attached at Appendix E. This appendix also provides a list of existing activities and events.
- 2.1.7 Our own experience tells us that the wood is regularly used for outdoor recreation by local people and visitors (in particular from the adjacent caravan park) mainly for walking (especially with dogs), but also for cycling, jogging and occasional horse riding. Most users walk to the woods. Users fall into six main categories:
  - Regular daily users - mainly dog walkers, joggers - mainly local residents and caravan park visitors. Regular users also include retired people who are interested in the outdoors and keeping healthy;
  - Social users like family groups on recreational walks who visit occasionally;
  - School groups on organised trips who combine learning and leisure;
  - Special interest user groups who enjoy Evanton Wood's history, heritage and natural environment e.g. Scouts, Guides, Nature groups, Walking Groups, specific event audiences;
  - Families who come specially for EWCC events;
  - Teenagers who wild camp by the river in the summer and who ride their mountain bikes in the woods.

## **2.2 What do we know about the audience for our heritage?**

- 2.2.1 We know that people already enjoy and are interested in the woods. We conducted a community survey which gleaned useful information, and we send out regular

newsletters to EWCC members inviting feedback. We have compiled information about usage by various groups, and this has helped us to identify and target potential future audiences. EWCC Directors live locally and receive regular informal feedback from local people. We know from our experience of organising school visits how much children enjoy visiting the woods and how this has inspired a group of them to produce a booklet of artwork about the animals that live there.

- 2.2.2 Numbers at trial events (supported by HLF and previously by Area Discretionary funding to allow us to gauge and develop interest) have been good. In our proposed HLF supported programme we would expect to increase numbers by 20-30%. Our three trial volunteer days have averaged 16 participants. We would envisage increasing volunteer numbers to around 20. Family events have attracted 20-60 people and we would expect to increase numbers to 40-80. Guided walks have attracted around 20-30; higher than this they might be unwieldy.
- 2.2.3 Without support from HLF, these events are most unlikely to take place. The target numbers are based on a realistic extrapolation of the numbers attending the trial events.
- 2.2.4 A community survey (Sept 2010) indicated a high level of satisfaction with the wood. It demonstrated that people in Evanton really value the wood for its beauty, peacefulness and proximity to the village, and would prefer the wood to remain as it is. They particularly do not want large scale felling of trees. Positive response was received from significant numbers of people as to the following suggestions:
1. Improved pathways
  2. Benches, seating
  3. Signage
  4. Squirrel viewing
  5. Forestry training
  6. Bike tracks
  7. Family events
  8. Pathways map
  9. Clear fallen trees
  10. Wildlife watching opportunities
  11. Guided walks

### **2.3 What are the barriers to involving people in and learning from the woods?**

- 2.3.1 As the wood is a green space adjacent to the village, with multiple entry points, local people are the biggest user group, along with users who stay at the caravan park. Barriers like muddy paths discourage people with mobility problems and people with children's buggies in particular. Some non-users may be discouraged by lack of signage. A number of specific barriers have been identified:

#### **Access barriers**

- 2.3.2 Whereas the wood is reasonably accessible for the able bodied and those that already know the site, for others some access barriers remain:
- Access points to the wood are not immediately clear (notwithstanding the entry signs for the Core Paths network);
  - There is no signage within the wood itself, and people can experience difficulty in locating features e.g. the pond and the gorge have been flagged up by potential users as difficult to find;

- Barriers to disabled access, in particular standing water in certain places on the core path;
- 2 kissing gates cannot be negotiated by buggy or wheelchair;
- Practical limitation posed by a lack of toilets and disabled car parking have also been recognised;
- Bus timetables have been subject to frequent changes.

### **Information barriers**

2.3.3 There is a lack of specific information, and therefore awareness, of what the wood has to offer. Some local people have surprisingly little knowledge of the resource on their doorstep. Whereas some young people make good use of parts of the wood for cycling, young people as a whole are not well represented among users. In order to engage our local youth we recognise the need to seek their opinions and understand their perceptions before taking specific action. We can then address perceptual and related issues imaginatively, through our activity programme.

### **Volunteering barriers**

2.3.4 The process of involving potential volunteers in the practical management of the wood needs clarification. Due consideration will be given to health and safety issues; volunteers will be given appropriate training and supervision. Special effort will be required to encourage involvement by teenagers and young adults.

### **Physical barriers**

2.3.5 There are few over-riding obstacles to involvement in the wood at one level or another. There will naturally be an emphasis on outdoor activities for which appropriate clothing and equipment will be required.

## **3 Activities**

### **3.1 What do we currently offer?**

3.1.1 Most visitors just come to enjoy the woods. Over the past 18 months we have trialed a range of community activities/small-scale events including Easter events, guided walks, sponsored cycle and walk, volunteer work days and ranger activities (bats and moths). Levels of participation in these activities have demonstrated a real interest in the wood from people within the Evanton community and from further afield. Running popular and successful activities has served to increase our confidence and abilities.

3.1.2 We have worked closely with Kiltearn Primary School in arranging a structured programme of visits. The wood has been used for Forest Schools type activities by Highland Council Ranger Service targeted at pupils with an emphasis on outdoor, hands-on learning.

3.1.3 The wood currently has no interpretation and very limited signage. The EWCC website has been developed over the past 18 months to keep the community informed. Facebook has also proved good for informing people about events.

### **3.2 What we have done in the development stage with the HLF grant, including changes made and what we have learned.**

### 3.2.1 We have run a range of **Events** including:

- 3 Volunteer Days in the wood averaging 16 participants. Initial training was provided by woodland specialists. Good progress was made in cutting down small Western Hemlock trees that were proliferating near the main intersection; some ditches were also cleared. Feed-back from participants is shown in 3.5.3.
- A community Easter Sunday event plus 2 preparatory egg painting days with children and parents. All were successful and enjoyable events.
- 2 Ranger led events:
  - A Bat Talk and Walk, which was attended by 30 people, with a good contingent of children.
  - A Moth Talk and Trapping (and releasing) exercise, which was attended by 10 people, including 3 children.
- We decided to postpone the planned Biodiversity Day to spring 2012 as we had underestimated the preparation time for such an event.

Learning Points: We now have a good idea as to what is involved in putting on events and the likely audience levels. We have made use of local activity providers and volunteers. We have invested in some cooking equipment. We are now of the view that a paid part-time Education and Outreach Coordinator will be required to help deliver our educational aspects of our HLF Activity Plan.

### 3.2.2 We have held 3 **Open Meetings** including:

- In February (just prior to the HLF Development Grant) some 25 people attended a meeting to share information and ideas about the wood. The feed-back indicated that, as a result, people were better informed about where we are applying for funding and how we are going to spend it; our proposed activities; the opportunities for getting involved.
- In June 17 members attended an interactive meeting facilitated by the consultant. After a presentation showing progress made by other community woodlands, people were divided into 3 groups to consider issues of access, woodland management, and education and training skills and made suggestions as to possible courses of action (see ...)
- At the AGM in October a full illustrated report was presented to the 20 members present, followed by a lively Q and A session.

Learning Points: We can now predict likely numbers for such meetings and the best ways in which to publicise them, including membership emails, posters and direct contact. We have also learnt about the potential dynamics of such meetings and how best to involve people actively using smaller groups.

### 3.3.3 We have carried out a range of actions including:

- a) Inviting various **specialists** to the wood:
  - Murdo MacDonald of the Highland Biological Recording Group has provided written advice on how to improve certain aspects of biodiversity.
  - Ornithologist Simon Cohen has done likewise from a slightly different angle.
  - Dendrologist and tree expert John Miller has helped us to identify a number of trees and has agreed to return to present a talk about trees to the group.

Learning Points: We have a better idea of the range of specialists (amateur and professional) available locally, and have developed a working relationship with several of them.

- b) Conducting an **Access Audit** using wheel and clinometer, assisted by the Highland Council Access Officer and Ross-shire Access Panel. We have also investigated wheelchair accessibility with a local member who uses an electric wheelchair.

Learning Points: We were surprised to find that the core path was more accessible than we had expected and have a better idea of specific improvements that are required to render the core path fully accessible.

- c) Running a full **selection process** to engage the lead consultant, bringing in the first chair of the company (who has extensive HR experience) to assist in the process. We have contracted and worked closely with the consultant and with the forestry expert to update earlier plans and complete this plan.
- d) Developing the **website** to provide feed-back on events and to communicate more effectively our ambitions and projects.
- e) Attracting **funding** from a range of sources, most of which is contingent on our success at HLF Stage 2. We have made various further bids for funding. We received the popular vote in the area Cooperative Big Community Vote, winning a cheque for £2k and gaining useful publicity from this exercise.
- f) Undertaking **learning visits** to other sites (see section 3.5) building on good practice from others.

### 3.3 How do our present audiences value the heritage and the activities offered?

3.3.1 Our community consultation exercises were held in September 2010, February 2011 and June 2011, and a range of structured discussions were held by the EWCC Directors with specialists in access, biodiversity and forest management. These discussions influenced our plan preparation and the kind of learning and participation activities we are proposing.

3.3.2 Responses to the evaluation of our volunteer days in April and May 2011 showed that people:

**Enjoyed** being outdoors, making a positive contribution to the future of the wood, being among the trees, seeing children enjoying the event and meeting other volunteers.

**Gained satisfaction from** opening up the beauty of woodland, knowing the work was worthwhile, meeting like-minded people, their contribution to the well-being and value of various woodland tree species, contributing with a huge commitment and improving the woodland canopy.

**Learnt new skills** in safe tree cutting, species identification, using cutting tools, safety in felling, improved sawing skills, learning how to use a saw correctly, felling, recognising trees, realising that Western hemlock could be such a problem.

**Wanted to learn new skills in** understanding more species, plants and trees, tree identification and possibly crosscut chainsaw.

**Considered future events could be improved by** just keep them going, by evidence of good work encouraging others, having more people, more pruning saws, a tool talk and set of ready to go catering equipment.

### **3.4 How do potential audiences value their heritage and the activities on offer?**

- 3.4.1 The following are extracts of from letters of support for the project showing how our audiences value the woodland heritage on their doorsteps.

Linda Cook, Head Teacher of Kiltearn Primary School, Evanton

*“Over the years we have used the woods as an outdoor classroom on numerous occasions and staff and pupils have benefited greatly from this. Local volunteers from the village have come to school to talk to us about the flora and fauna of the woods and have led class visits to the woods helping to motivate and enthuse the children about the wildlife in and around the woods.”*

Moira Mckenna, Leader 1st Evanton Guide Unit

*“As a unit we feel the woods are an invaluable resource for us. We currently have permission from the estate to use the woods and have undertaken a variety of activities, such as wildlife spotting, shelter building, map reading, trail building and tracking activities. As the woods are within yards of the Diamond Jubilee Hall, our meeting place, they are ideally suited and easy to access as well as being safe to access, with no major road crossings, which is important as sometimes small groups of girls go on their own, to lay trails for instance”.*

Trevor Black, Evanton Youth Enterprise

*We have been supportive of the community bid to purchase Evanton Wood from the start and recognise that community ownership will open up further opportunities for the youth population of the area. We are indeed keen to collaborate on joint ventures in the wood. We would envisage joint working on activities such as*

- *Building temporary shelters using on-site materials*
- *Building a more permanent timber shelter (young people could be engaged on a work experience basis under suitable supervision)*
- *Fund-raising for youth activities and events*
- *Setting up and running such activities and events eg practical skills (green wood skills such as wood turning); music events with a youth music focus; other creative activities; mountain-bike/other bike events”.*

### **3.5 Building on good practice in other organisations**

- 3.51. A group of six EWCC Directors and others, accompanied by our Forestry Consultant, visited two established community woodland projects to get some ideas. We noted that:

- In Findhorn Hinterland Wood we learnt in particular about the community involvement in firewood extraction, sources of potential funding for infrastructure and events, and we were introduced to the attractive, sturdy wooden shelter and composting toilet designed by a local architect and completed partly through an employment creation scheme.
- The firewood project at Findhorn worked well. They had paid for about 20 people to get their chain saw licence. This group then contributed 16 hours a year in return felling timber. We would like to have a firewood project at Evanton Wood

and would consult further with Findhorn if we successfully gain ownership of the wood.

- The simple but attractive wooden shelter at Findhorn, and the area for an open fire seemed like a very practical, low cost space for bringing people together, for meetings, sleep overs etc. Suitable for Scout and Guide camps etc. A building in the wood is an idea which has come up from time to time, and this very simple shelter seemed very practical.
- Findhorn's low cost approach was very good and they achieved what they set out to achieve with very low capital input. Taking more people from Evanton to see Findhorn would be a good idea.
- In Farr Community Woodland we visited both of their woods, admiring their paths and family friendly signage, learning of their close connection with the local school (Safer Routes to School goes via the wood) and how they manage the wood. The signage used roundels of different animals made by local children - a friendly way to involve all ages in the wood. We could use the artwork produced by Evanton primary school children in a similar fashion.
- A recent visit by 4 directors to Milton Community Woodland provided valuable information about various training programmes run by the group, and opened the potential for future collaboration.
- We have been in close contact with Community Woodlands Association who provided ready advice, and have attended their AGM/2 day conference in November 2011.

Learning Points: We now have a better idea of how other community woodlands are managed and where there is a supportive network to which we can turn.

## **SECTION 2 - STRATEGIC DECISIONS INVOLVING PEOPLE**

### **4.1 Our aims**

- 4.1.1 Our aims for involving people are contained within our vision, three objectives and six outcomes and these will be realised through our proposed activities.

#### **Vision**

- 4.1.2 'Evanton Wood Community Company aims to purchase and actively manage the woodland for the benefit of the community, in a manner that maintains and enhances the rich and diverse environment, and develops its educational, recreational and timber resource. This will bring a priceless asset under the control and ownership of the community in perpetuity, providing a sustainable fuel source, learning and employment opportunities, and a bio-diverse amenity for all to enjoy.

#### **Objectives**

- 4.1.3 We have set the following objectives for our project:

- 1) To continue to manage the wood on a system of low impact silvicultural systems including continuous cover.
- 2) To increase the involvement of people in the wood, especially the local community.
- 3) To encourage the biodiversity and enhance the beauty of the wood.

#### **Outcomes**

- 4.1.4 We have agreed what we want our project to achieve:

- The wood will remain a special place for people and wildlife (something that could not be guaranteed under private ownership).
- The wood will be more than just trees as biodiversity flourishes and increases.
- The woodland will offer more low key informal recreation for everyone to enjoy.
- There will be improving knowledge within the community derived from a woodland learning environment.
- Our woodland heritage will be well cared for with volunteers participating in many woodland management operations.
- The wood will be part of a network of habitats and village paths linking people with woodland places in Ross-shire.

#### **Our specific aims for involving people**

- 4.1.5 Our aim is to involve the local community in the ownership and management of the wood by purchasing it from Novar estate, and then helping local people to safeguard and use it for the future benefit of the entire community.

We hope to assist local people in learning about and participating in woodland management tasks, so that they are better equipped to both manage the wood and govern the EWCC over the long term. We want more people and school children to learn about the biodiversity and forest heritage in the wood so that they are better informed about this unique resource, and better able to appreciate its importance in national and international terms, and to pass this information on to others.

- 4.1.6 In addition, we aim to make the wood as accessible and attractive as possible to all current and potential users.

- We will do this by improving physical access, providing orientation and information, by involving people in practical activities including woodland management, thereby increasing their skills and confidence;
- We will provide activities and family events in the woods for a wide range of ages covering a variety of interests and disciplines;
- We will engage with the community through open meetings, our website, posters, word-of-mouth, encouraging people to actively engage with their wood;
- We will make special effort to involve people with special needs both from within and outwith the community;
- We will take particular action to engage young people (aged 15 to 25) in the wood through activities which most appeal to them;
- We will learn from the experience of the range of trial events and activities run to date, from which we have received plenty of (positive) feed-back;
- We will offer regular school visits to local primary and secondary schools.

#### **4.2 How our project fits with EWCC's overall activity and how it is *guided by our strategy and policies* and how we are showing our commitment to putting the activity plan into action.**

- 4.2.1 We want to encourage people to be active in, and learn in a wood with secure and sustainable community ownership. This project is our main activity and our articles of association of our charitable company set out our five supporting purposes as follows:

1. To manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the Community and the public in general following the principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
2. To provide, or assist in providing, recreational facilities, and/or organising recreational activities which will be available to members of the public at large, with the object of improving the conditions of the life of the Community, and following principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
3. To advance Community development, including urban or rural regeneration, following principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4. To advance the education of the Community about its environment, heritage, culture and history.
  5. To advance environmental protection or improvement, including preservation, and conservation of the natural environment, the promotion of sustainable development, the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the Community and/or preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the Community.
- 4.2.2 Over the past 18 months Directors and other volunteers have been actively engaged in developing plans, doing community surveys, manning information stalls, running a range of trial activities, hosting speakers, and visiting and learning from other community woods. All of this demonstrates the strong commitment within the EWCC and the wider community to the woodland purchase, and subsequent management and active involvement of people in our Activity Plan.
  - 4.2.3 We now recognise the need to engage an Education and Outreach Coordinator to work with Directors, volunteers, agencies and any other paid providers to help deliver the activities in our five year plan.
  - 4.2.4 Our interpretation policy informs how we go about designing interpretation panels, signage, leaflets and our website.
  - 4.2.5 Our volunteer policy will protect our volunteers, and our training policy will ensure members and local people are provided with training in woodland management tasks.
- 4.3 Choices we have made about audiences for the heritage in our project.**
- 4.3.1 Our audience choices are based on the principle of taking the wood on our door step into local ownership and giving people the opportunity to learn about and participate in managing a wood of local and international importance.
  - 4.3.2 We believe that involvement in local heritage gives a more secure 'sense of place', can increase self-confidence, can engender community pride and can help to bring the community together. We recognise that the woodland heritage provides considerable opportunities for people of all ages, and that younger people can be encouraged to make greater use of the wood through a tailored approach which is devised in collaboration with them.
  - 4.3.3 We are aware that some older and less able people would like to make greater use of the wood but are put off by muddy tracks and some other obstacles. We intend to improve the path network and remove these barriers. By improving stewardship skills and putting on family events and school visits, we would give future generations the necessary knowledge to care for and enjoy the wood and to learn about it in safety. We strongly believe it would be very sad if the next generation growing up in our village did not have the opportunity to enjoy their woodland heritage.
  - 4.3.4 We recognise that the wood is of great interest to people from far and wide and we will ensure that such visitors can continue to enjoy their experience in the wood, and enhance their visit by installing appropriate interpretation and signage.
- 4.4 Who are our potential audiences, why they matter and how we will involve them?**

- 4.4.1 Our main potential audiences are those that already use the woods, namely: the community, organised groups, volunteers and educational groups. We recognise the potential to increase the user numbers and enhance their involvement in the wood. We propose these audiences because they are the most relevant people that will benefit from community ownership of the wood and the planned activity programme. Most of our audiences already live in or close to Evanton and through these activities the wood can become a greater part of their everyday lives.

### **Community**

- 4.4.2 The wood provides an important setting for social interaction for all age groups. Community and family activities in the wood matter because they promote community cohesion and improve people's enjoyment and sense of satisfaction with where they live and visit.
- 4.4.3 Access improvements will help to attract new community users to the wood, and increase the number of regular repeat visitors. Management of the wood, as well as the development of new activities and events, supports greater community participation in the wood, appealing to more and different visitors; thereby expanding people's participation and learning.
- 4.4.4 The wood is an important destination for education and for people of all ages to learn about the history and heritage of the wood. The project proposals include the provision of information about the history and heritage of the wood, as well as its natural environment, guided by a formal interpretive plan.
- 4.4.5 We have included proposals to expand the activities and events designed to increase people's understanding of the wood's history, heritage and natural environment. The Education and Outreach Coordinator will plan and deliver a series of learning activities and events. These activities will also be supported by the use of experts to give walks and talks on specific subjects e.g. bats, geology, heritage forestry, etc.

### **Volunteers**

- 4.4.6 The wood matters to people who volunteer because they can gain new skills and interests and can take up opportunities to learn in depth through attendance at specialist walks, talks and training events. We have individuals who will provide specialist leadership at our volunteer sessions, ensuring work is done safely and showing people how they can make a difference to the wood.
- 4.4.7 We plan to increase the number of people who volunteer to participate in the management and maintenance of the wood. Our trial volunteer days attracted two types of people.
- Regular, or semi-regular, volunteers providing a core group of people who are willing to develop new skills and management interests. This group would be coordinated through the website, word of mouth and regular volunteering days.
  - One-off, or ad hoc, volunteers who turn up for specific activities and projects e.g. specific maintenance works, one-off events and activities.
- 4.4.8 Volunteers may also be drawn from other organisations, particularly those with established links to the wood, for example the British Trust for Conservation

Volunteers (BTCV) environmental charity who have already used the wood as a location for their Green Gym programme.

### **Educational Groups - Schools and Colleges**

- 4.4.9 The wood already provides particular opportunities for local school and college trips- Kiltarn Primary School, Alness Academy and the Scottish School of Forestry, Inverness College UHI. It matters to them because they can combine learning with practical experience in an accessible location.
- 4.4.10 Pre-school groups are known to use the wood, and nursery children (in their red all-weather jump suits) really enjoy their visits to a safe outdoor learning environment.
- 4.4.11 Other potential educational audiences are adults and children with learning difficulties and disabilities who attend local centres.
- 4.4.12 It is recognised that an Educational Resource Pack should be developed for the wood. We consider there are specific topics that could be developed, rather than a general pack on woodland wildlife. We propose the pack would include project based materials on, for example:
- a) Douglas Fir (growing in the wood) that would encompass the history and provenance of Douglas Fir (Who was David Douglas?) and the use of Douglas Fir in contemporary sustainable architecture alongside forestry and biodiversity.
  - b) How the names of native trees in the Highland were used to teach the Gaelic alphabet and how they feature in many place names today telling you something of the history and geology/ soil type etc.
  - c) A focus on some of the particular elements of biodiversity in the wood.
- 4.4.13 We propose to develop links with the Forest School initiative. Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults, regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment. Forest School is suitable for anyone. It is particularly beneficial for Early Years children, local community groups, young people not succeeding in school for whatever reason, adults and children with physical disabilities, challenging behaviour, learning difficulties and many others.

A recent study carried out by the Forestry Commission in Wales measured the beneficial effects of Forest School. The areas of benefit they identified reflect the outcomes which time and again, are associated with Forest School. These are:

- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Improved social skills;
- The development of language and communication skills;
- Improved physical motor skills;
- Improved motivation and concentration;
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the environment

We know of at least two local residents who are qualified/about to qualify as Forest School leaders and we have been in discussion with Abriachan Community Woodland about future training courses. This initiative would provide scope for a wider range of educationally focused activities in the wood.

## **Organised Groups**

4.4.14 The wood matters to groups like Scouts and Guides, Cubs and Brownies, Duke of Edinburgh Award participants, healthy walking groups (eg Step It Up Highland), field and natural history societies like the Woodland Trust and the Highland Biological Recording Group, professional forestry groups etc. It provides a potential location and focus for a range of biological recording and other woodland and biodiversity activities (see letters of support).

## **Other groups**

4.4.15 We know the woods holds actual and potential interest for a range of other audiences including geologists, film makers (eg Arts in Motion local film animation group) photographers, drama groups, visual artists and scientists. The Black Rock Gorge, adjacent to the wood was used for two films, including "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire". There are likely to be other scientists, individuals and groups who use the wood who have contacted Novar Estate in the past. We are happy to have a dialogue with all these groups and our website may provide the initial point of contact for others.

4.4.16 We know the site matters to a group of wetsuit clad outdoor pursuit enthusiasts who recently made their way down the Black Rock Gorge. The past two very cold winters have also seen ice climbers using the vertical ice on the gorge walls. Both groups have posted videos of their experiences on YouTube – paving the way for others to follow.

## **4.5 What we will do to involve people?**

4.5.1 The Activity Plan provides for the following kinds of actions designed to overcome barriers to involvement.

### **Visitors**

4.5.2 Giving visitors improved access to bus timetables, clear walking and cycle routes and signage to the wood. Path signage, disabled access and toilet provision are to be addressed. EWCC directors have already carried out Access Audits on the key routes around the woodland to identify problems.

4.5.3 The Woodland Management Plan identifies upgrades to walks and trails to create better, and easier access into and around the wood e.g. Orientation maps, welcome signs, all weather surfaces plus provision of some way-markers, seating, other woodland furniture and picnic facilities.

4.5.4 Visitor interpretive guides/leaflets will be prepared and produced in paper copies for users without access to online materials. Guides will be distributed locally in shops, public buildings and accommodation providers to make people aware of the wood's unique heritage.

4.5.4 The website will provide pre-trip information to enable users to plan their visit, and a place to contribute post trip feedback. The website will be expanded into a comprehensive primary information source for visitors, users and volunteers and an archive for research and site history. In the future, the website should become the central key portal to communicate with people and it will focus on:

- Woodland management

- Biodiversity management
- Informal recreation
- Education and outreach
- Volunteering and engagement

### **Young people**

- 4.5.5 Approaches have recently been made to schools to establish potential interest in visiting the wood. We know from experience that a barrier to involving secondary schools is the time and commitment required to fit such visits into the busy school schedule, as well as transport costs. We recognise that the new Curriculum for Excellence is starting to place more emphasis on outdoor learning and we will be well placed to offer a suitable location and experience.
- 4.5.6 Educational trips will be encouraged by the creation of the Educational Resource Pack (adaptable for different age groups and abilities) and focused effort by the Education and Outreach Coordinator.
- 4.5.7 We would be particularly keen to develop bushcraft skills as an innovative way of involving young people especially in woodland activities. Bushcraft is an enjoyable way of delivering learning, traditional skills, sensitive woodland management and physical activity in a woodland setting and has gained popularity through exponents like Ray Mears.
- 4.5.8 Evanton Youth Enterprise has indicated an intention to work with EWCC in running regular activities in the wood. Initial support at least has been offered by the local Youth Officer.

### **Volunteers**

- 4.5.9 We are working with local media outlets to promote community ownership of the wood before and after a successful bid. We have made use of listings pages in e.g. Ross-shire Journal, North Star, Inverness Courier, Inverness City Advertiser and Moray Firth Radio. We will also seek more potential volunteers and special user groups through this media coverage.
- 4.5.10 We will establish formal procedures to register and manage volunteers. Our website will be the primary communication tool outwith the village, but there will also be a local promotion campaign, building on local interest.
- 4.5.11 Volunteers will undergo induction and further training to ensure they are able to make the contribution required of them. On-going management will ensure that volunteers are fully supported and encouraged, and that best use is made of their specific skills. This will also include on-going training, where needs and opportunities are identified.
- 4.5.12 The Action Plan includes the purchase of specialist personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing. All equipment and clothing will be held locally and allocated to volunteers and visitors as required. This is essential to attract and safeguard volunteers, but may also be important in enabling the wood to host specialist walks and talks targeted at visitors e.g. night-time bat walks.

## **4.6 Overview of our activities and reasons for choosing them**

4.6.1 We plan to put on family events, guided walks, volunteer days and biological recording events. People will have the opportunity to be involved in the heritage of the wood in a variety of different ways, satisfying the varying levels of knowledge and interest of people within our community and from elsewhere. We also plan to offer regular visits to local primary and secondary schools.

4.6.2 We plan to provide:

- Five family events a year (such as an Easter event, sponsored cycle and walk, an acoustic music event, a Halloween event and a Christmas event in the first year). This could be varied in later years, in response to interest, with events potentially involving photography, art, drama, music and film making etc.
- Four guided walks – covering topics such as woodland management, geology, botany, tree identification, archaeology, local legends etc.
- Seven volunteer days giving people the opportunity to take part in woodland management tasks such as clearing invasive Western Hemlock, clearing ditches, thinning young regenerated trees, brashing, etc.
- Improvements to woodland biodiversity through a programme of woodland restructuring to open up areas of the woodland and to plant native trees.
- People will be encouraged to take part in ‘citizen science’ via biological recording events, to include a ‘Bioblitz’ event where specialists and lay people come together for a concentrated event. This information will be available for people to use and study.
- Supported school visits, targeted on particular projects in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

## **4.7 How are we meeting HLF aims for learning and participation?**

4.7.1 The Action Plan focuses on describing where and how the project will deliver against HLFs Learning and Participation themes to both new and existing audiences. Our plan presents the key information to demonstrate our commitment to involving people in the use, heritage and long term sustainable management of the wood and to support HLF’s aims of participation and learning:

**Learning: Help people to learn about their own and other people’s heritage. This means**

- Providing and interpreting information about the wood for users:
- Creating opportunities for people to gain new skills in the wood:
- Hosting learning events/activities about the wood’s heritage:

4.7.2 We consider that by providing information, interpretation, activities, events and volunteering opportunities in the wood we will encourage people of all ages and abilities to open their eyes, ears and minds and learn about the history and heritage in their local area, and also about their natural environment.

4.7.3 Guided walks, volunteer days, biological recording, interpretation panels and publications on biodiversity will all give members of the community the opportunity to learn about the forest heritage and biodiversity of the wood and will serve to stimulate further personal and community interests.

Table 1 provides an annual programme of the kind of events planned for the woods and their fit with HLF aims, based on what the EWCC consider achievable.

4.7.4 The Action Plan proposes to expand the range and number of community events, volunteer days and guided activities, allowing people to participate in new learning experiences.

**Participation: Help more people, and a wide range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about their heritage through an increased number of volunteers doing a broader range of activities in the wood. This means:**

- More community participation in the wood:
- Attracting new users (audience) to the wood:

4.7.5 All our project activities are designed to expand the numbers and deepen the interest and commitment of people who are participating in the wood, through volunteering for management, physical tasks and participating in activities. Table 1 below shows our proposed programme.

**Table 1 Proposed Activity Calendar**

Events	HLF Aims	P	L
Jan	Open Meeting/Talk		X
Feb	Talk		X
March	Easter Event (March or April)	X	
April	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Family Event Easter Event Youth Meet	X X X	X X
May	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Guided walk – dawn chorus Youth Meet	X X	X X
June	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Guided walk – woodland management/history of wood Youth Meet	X X	X X
July	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Guided walk - geology/archaeology/ botany	X	X X
August	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Summer Family Event - Acoustic Music event Youth Meet	X X X	X X
Sept	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Autumn Family Event Sponsored cycle and walk Youth Meet	X X X X	X X X
Oct	Volunteer day first Saturday of month Halloween Autumn Family Event – Halloween	X X	X
Nov	Guided walk Autumn colours and woodland fungi		X
Dec	Pre-Christmas Winter Family Event	X	

Biological recording – four surveys a year for two years, two in the third year. School visits 6-10 visits per year: Potentially 6 for Kiltearn Primary and 4 for Alness Academy and Dingwall/Invergordon Academy
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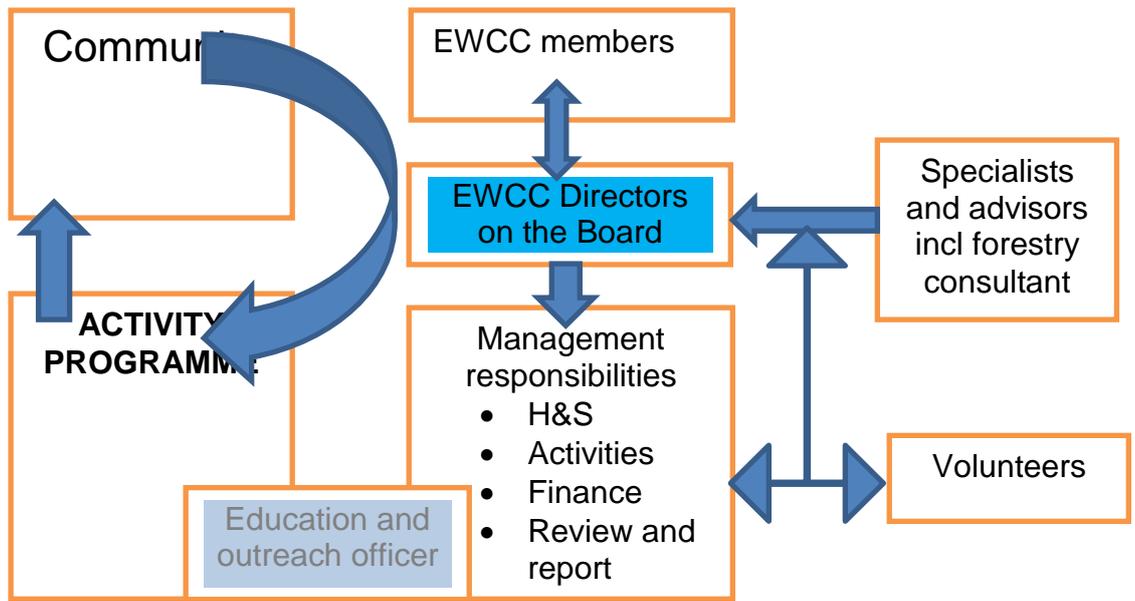
- 4.7.6 Volunteering will give people the opportunity to participate in woodland management tasks, helping them to feel involved in looking after the wood, and enabling them to learn about woodland management, particularly the special type of management of continuous cover employed in the wood which is responsible for its variety and biodiversity. The opportunity to sit on the board of EWCC and be involved in decision making is open to all local residents over 18. After purchase of the wood, consideration will be given to opening full membership to all.
- 4.7.7 Trial activities have indicated that a wide range of people are interested in getting involved in the wood. Some young people have been involved in wood-turning and related activities. We see such activities as having a potential for further engagement.
- 4.7.8 Development for the wood is less targeted at specific user groups, and is more about removing barriers and opening people's eyes and minds to what is on their door step. A recent woodland walk with a wheelchair user and his wife has helped us to recognise the potential for involving disabled people and improving their experience of the wood.

## **4.8 Management of our activities**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 4.8.1 Our project is being led and directed by the eight EWCC Directors with input from our 70 members. We do not have any paid staff. In preparation for this bid we have undertaken significant community consultation and have sought input by a range of key partners.
- 4.8.2 Our principal aims and objectives of community ownership remain unchanged from the HLF Stage 1. As described in this Activity Plan, the Business Plan and Woodland Management Plan, there is a clear and agreed structure for the future management of the woods that will delivery co-ordination of effort and activity. This is summarised in Figure 1.
- 4.8.3 This structure addresses day-to-day management issues in the wood. The Directors will meet regularly in the early years of ownership. Standing agenda items would be user safety (public liability), tree and infrastructure inspections, volunteers and events, child protection and disclosure. We, and our partners, will define and agree the scope of volunteering/training, and will promote/organise/deliver the events schedule. We will let the community know about woodland activities and gather their views on improvements.

**Figure 1 Structure chart for management responsibilities**



A more detailed description of our management arrangements, memorandum and EWCC Directors is attached at Appendix C.

## Education and Outreach Coordinator

- 4.8.4 We regard support personnel as a key issue. The Activity Plan includes actions to manage resources, activities and volunteer effort more effectively through the appointment of a self-employed Education and Outreach Coordinator. We have applied to the Robertson Trust for three years funding for this post with the possibility of a further application to them for an additional two years. Kiltarn Community Council (KCC) will be responsible for administering wind farm and other grants of around £40k from 2013. Based on their past support for the project, and our close relationship with the council, we are optimistic that the application to continue funding towards the Education and Outreach Coordinator post would be considered sympathetically. If the application to the Robertson Trust is unsuccessful we expect that the KCC would consider an earlier request to support the post. A job contract description is attached at Appendix D.

### Activity management

- 4.8.5 The Education and Outreach Coordinator would have responsibility for organising all events, under the supervision of the EWCC board.

**Family events** will require two board members to be involved with the E&O officer in organisation, plus a further two to three volunteers on the day.

**Volunteer days** will be supervised overall by our forestry consultant with one 'marshal' per five volunteers – probably about four marshals in total. Days will be pre planned, tool training and catering provided for volunteers.

A specialist will be engaged to lead **Guided walks and talks** supported by two EWCC board members.

A specialist will be employed to lead **Biological Recording** and to work with groups such as school groups with the assistance of volunteers.

Our E&O Officer will liaise with schools and specialists to set up **school visits**. Volunteers will accompany specialists if required and subject to necessary disclosure requirements.

- 4.8.6 We have sought specialist input from various organisations and individuals from within and outwith the community as necessary. The Scottish Wildlife Trust, Highland Biological Recording Group, Inverness Bat Group, British Trust for Ornithology, the Highland Council Ranger, and Cameron Ross, Forestry consultant, and John Miller, dendrologist, and the Ross-shire Access Panel have all visited the wood with us.
- 4.8.7 We are fortunate to already know personally a significant number of people in the field of forestry, trees, natural history, archaeology and geology who have given willingly of their expertise and advice. We met with Scottish Natural Heritage to explain our plans. In October 2011 we gave an illustrated presentation to the Kiltarn Community Council AGM attended by 20 people.

### On-going consultation and liaison

- 4.8.8 A key aspect of our management structure when taking strategic decisions includes:
- Consultation with our members;

- Consultation with our local community;
- Partnership with Kiltearn Community Council;
- Liaison with other local community bodies and public agencies;
- Liaison with Novar Estate and other neighbouring land owners, land managers and house holders with property adjacent to the woods;

4.8.9 Delivery of projects in the wood will also involve other leaders, rangers and people from other organisations using the wood. Our future management arrangements will ensure co-ordination of such activities, events, maintenance, staffing and volunteers within the management aims. Good communications with Novar Estate and joint planning with others are essential to ensure people benefit from wider footpath networks links, and sites like the Black Rock Gorge continue to offer public benefits.

4.8.10 Overall, we will have the primary responsibility for the woodland purchase and management. The day-to-day responsibility for management and monitoring of activities also rests with us and we will report on a regular basis to their membership (via website, e-newsletters and channels like community council meetings) on progress against the formal objectives, identifying areas where remedial action is required e.g. where progress is not meeting expected outcomes. We will have responsibility for identifying difficulties and problems, and agreeing solutions.

#### **4.9 How we will handle any potential difficulties in involving people.**

4.9.1 With any project there are inevitably risks. It is therefore important to identify and manage these risks to maximise the success of the project. Community organisations like ours mostly face risks connected with people, the community, company management structures and finance. As a priority we will revisit our health and safety policy and ensure the appropriate insurances are in place before we take on ownership.

4.9.2 Our plans are dependent on continued volunteer commitment to multi-tasking at events, including acting as marshals, providing refreshments etc. We have had good commitment to date and are confident that this will continue. Overall responsibility for events has tended to fall heavily on one or two sets of shoulders and we are aware that we will need to broaden the capacity of the group to run these and additional events. The Education and Outreach Coordinator will be able to provide importance assistance in this regard.

4.9.3 We have found that people in Evanton are very interested in both the management of the wood and its biodiversity. Involving people in a small community is to a large extent dependent on building relationships and giving people an enjoyable experience. It is important to ensure that events are well organised, that people have plenty to do, and that adequate tools are provided. Experience has shown that encouraging participation though word of mouth is often more successful than through posters

#### **Internal Risk Assessment**

4.9.4 We have done an internal risk assessment for the Activity Plan. Each risk factor is described, together with its potential effect, probability/impact, and awarded a risk level. We will monitor the risks over the lifetime of the Activity Plan period (5 years).

4.9.5 In total, five significant internal risks are identified for the Activity Plan. Risks are then ranked as follows:

- green – low risk score
- amber – medium risk score
- red – higher risk score

These are presented in Table 2 below.

### **External Risk Analysis**

- 4.9.6 Woodlands, by their nature, are dynamic places and come with associated risks. They can change quite rapidly and, of course, are vulnerable to catastrophic events like storms and fire.
- 4.9.7 Equally, should the community not purchase the woodland, it will, most likely, be sold on the open market to a private owner with commercial interests/motivation, which may or may not coincide with community interests.
- 4.9.8 More details on the external risk areas considered as having the potential to cause a major impact are set out in the business plan.

<b>Table 2 Risk Assessment</b>						
#	Risk	How likely is the event	How serious would the effect be?	Risk Level	Action taken to help prevent the risk	Who is responsible
1	HLF funding is not awarded for the Activity Plan, or only in part	Board have worked very hard to engage public support and interest and believe they have a good chance of getting HLF support.	Wood placed on open market resulting in uncertainty and perhaps minimal levels of access improvements.		Best quality Activity Plan submitted to HLF based on significant levels of consultation with the community and partners.	EWCC Board
2	Activities not possible without Grant	Board have worked very hard to engage public support and interest and believe they have a good chance of getting HLF support.	Without HLF grant support the level of woodland activities proposed would not be possible – this would be a serious risk to the EWCC		Activities have been trialled successfully and evidence gathered accordingly. Advice has been sought from experts and specialists. Robust Plan in place.	EWCC Board & other stakeholders
3	Education and Outreach Coordinator position not funded	Depends on Robertson Trust who have supported similar projects	It would curtail implementation of the Educational activities and other Outreach activities		Good quality application submitted. We will hear soon (end November) and so would have 3+ months to secure alternative funding. Volunteers could take on some aspects of running the programme.	
4	Low Demand for events and volunteers activities	Woodland events and activities run to date have proved popular with local people so this risk is considered to be low.	Low demand would be surprising but not terminal. Some activities eg biological recording will be viable with relatively low numbers.		Monitor and adjust promotional effort as required for both events and volunteer days and ensure activities are well marketed and promoted. Retain volunteers through training and motivational activities.	EWCC Board & other stakeholders
5	Sustainability of project after end of HLF funding	The wood will provide some income from timber/firewood and local funding from other sources such wind farm funds will be available	The EWCC are committed to long term management of the wood.		Forward planning by the Board will ensure funding is in place. See comment below on external risk.	EWCC Board & partners
6	Insufficient succession	Execution of the project is wholly dependent on	A lack of succession and volunteer 'burn out', illness etc can have an		Board is fully aware of the importance of this issue and is working to address it. Directors will	EWCC Board

	planning	leadership by the EWCC board, and its ability to attract new members and volunteers.	impact on lean, community led bodies, leading to loss of direction and focus. This could be potentially serious for EWCC if it is not addressed at an early stage.		have clear roles and responsibilities within the board. A vice-chair is in place to act as deputy to the chair. Successful funding will encourage others to join an enthusiastic volunteer pool and to select appropriately effective paid assistance. There is a core of committed individuals and the present directors have a good skills base and wide connections.	
7	Public Perception	Public concern at timber harvesting – as mentioned in community survey.	Public support is essential to the community ownership and management of the wood. The public has to be brought along at all times.		The Board will engage with the local community in particular on all matters pertaining to good woodland management, including the need for a programme of thinning, regeneration and replanting. It will do so by public presentations, guided walks, information in print and on the web.	
8	Public misuse	Currently there is occasional fly-tipping, also leaving of bottles and litter after occasional parties by the river.	It would be serious if such abuse were to increase but the opposite is more likely once people know that it is a community owned asset. Dealing with offenders will not be easy.		Ensuring that a strong message is put over by every means at our disposal that the woods are for everyone to enjoy and that people should follow the Countryside Code.	

#### **4.10 Measures of success for involving people**

- 4.10.1 Monitoring and evaluation is at the heart of the Activity Plan. It establishes responsibility to ensure that the project meets its targets, is delivered on time, to budget and to the agreed objectives, where remedial action is required, and who has responsibility for it.
- 4.10.2 We will count the number of people attending events, volunteer days, training and other activities. We will regularly seek feed-back from participants without overloading participants with questions. We will also assess people's enjoyment, their learning experience, and other significant outcomes of our work and activities. We recognise that many outcomes are difficult to measure immediately and would propose a more in-depth study at the end of the project.
- 4.10.3 Evaluation forms will be used on a regular basis as appropriate. The website will allow further feedback and comments/suggestions for improvements. Membership newsletters and the website will allow the Board to share the results of such feedback and proposed action to improve future events.
- 4.10.4 There will be further reporting through the Annual General Meeting and occasional Open Meetings. Direct communication through Directors will also continue to be encouraged. The Education and Outreach Coordinator's brief requires regular reporting to Directors, funders of activities and user feedback.
- 4.10.5 An Annual Statement of Progress against the five year Activity Plan will be produced. This will include:
- progress report for each of the individual activity themes;
  - risks, issues and challenges;
  - expenditure and income;
  - progress towards targets.

This Annual Statement will also be given to the Kiltarn Community Council and other key partners including HLF.

- 4.10.6 At the end of the five year Activity Plan period, EWCC will produce a formal Exit Report for HLF, summarising progress against the Activity Plan, the formal objectives and identifying key learning points.

#### **4.11 Long term benefits**

- 4.11.1 We are aware that to ensure best value, widespread active involvement in the wood needs to be sustainable in the long-term i.e. after Year 5. Our projects have been designed around an annual timetable to become regular fixtures in the community calendar. With ongoing support from the Wind Farm fund they will be sustainable beyond the HLF funded five year Activity Plan period, although it is likely that their content will change. It is envisaged that, after five years, the project will have developed from mainly established family events to include regular involvement of people in woodland management and firewood initiatives. We hope that as confidence increases local groups will start to use the wood to run their own activities.

- 4.11.2 EWCC will generate income through timber sales as per the Management Plan. Firewood sales will also help the financial viability of the wood.
- 4.11.3 EWCC has already benefitted from the local wind farm grant fund. This fund is set to increase significantly in future years and it will be open to EWCC to apply for funding. Such funding would be invested in further improvements to the wood and in developing further opportunities for people to become involved.
- 4.11.4 For the long term sustainability of our project, community ownership of the wood should be seen to have a strong fit with regional and national policies, particularly with regard to community development, education, health, recreation and wider environmental sustainability. Through our tying in with Council policies, locally elected councillors, council staff (like the Ranger Service) and other public bodies will be better able to become project advocates. We consider our proposals have a good fit with the following Council plans and policies

#### **(a) The Highland Council Corporate Plan**

*“The Highland Council wants the Highlands to be one of Europe’s leading regions. We want to create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands. We want to build a fairer and healthier Highlands. To do this we will focus our action on our children and families, our communities and older people, our economy, our environment and as a public body with duties to represent our communities, we will act to make the Council more effective and efficient.”*

The Highland Council Corporate Plan 2009 -2011 outlines five strategic priorities, including a theme of being effective and efficient. We believe the wood contributes to aims and objectives under all the themes, but in particular focuses on three:

- Children and families
- Communities and older people
- The environment

#### **(b) The Highland Council - Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan 2007**

##### **Green Networks Supplementary Planning Guidance 2010**

Green Networks comprise of a network of green spaces and green corridors within and around settlements, linking out into the wider countryside. They can help to enhance the area’s biodiversity, quality of life and sense of place. A green network also provides the setting in which high quality, sustainable development can occur.

The guidance notes that there are pressures for development around all of our larger settlements but most noticeably around the major settlements in the Inner Moray Firth. In these areas green networks have an important role to play in creating an attractive, high quality environment in which to live, visit, work and invest.

The value of green spaces as they relate to economic enhancement, health, culture and conservation/biodiversity is recognised. The importance of working with local communities and volunteers is acknowledged.

#### **(c) Ross and Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Action Plan**

This local level plan, produced in July 2004, documents local aspirations over the following 5-10 years, and follows on from national level plans; the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which addressed biodiversity conservation in response to the Rio Convention in 1992; and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, launched in May 2004, which sets out a 25 year strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland.

#### **(d) Ross and Cromarty Core Path Plan**

The Core Path Plan includes a loop within Evanton Woods and a link to the Black Rock Gorge from the Strathglass road. Main core path entry points close to the village are from Camden Street and the Chapel. The paths are described as constructed paths/forest track.

Core Paths cater for all types of users - walkers, cyclists, horse riders, people with disabilities, etc. and are a key part of outdoor access provision. It is the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that safe access is provided to the public at all times on these designated routes and this has implications on certain management operations. The Plan was adopted in September 2011.

#### **4.12 How will we be different after the project and how will we continue to develop?**

- 4.12.1 The project will place the EWCC on a firm footing as woodland owners. We will understand our responsibilities as owners and will continue to seek further training and advice both on involving people and managing the woods. We will be able to be more welcoming to people wishing to use the wood. Improved signage, interpretation and publications will enable more people to enjoy our wood and school visits will be well established and continuing after the end of the project.
- 4.12.2 By the end of the project we intend to have an established core of about 50 people who are involved with the management of the wood at some time during the year. Importantly our members will have increased their knowledge and understanding of woodland heritage and management. Hopefully many more people living in Evanton will have a heightened sense of pride in the important wood on their doorstep.
- 4.12.3 In addition to family fun events, more work based activity in the woodland will be undertaken and enough local people will be trained in chainsaw skills to be able to fell timber for firewood and carry out routine thinning (under appropriate supervision).

#### **4.13 How will we share the lessons of our project?**

- 4.13.1 As noted in Section 4.8 on management we will regularly report what we have done to our members and the community via newsletters, our website and formally through our AGM. As members of the Community Woodland Association, EWCC representatives will try to attend annual conferences and training/awareness events.
- 4.13.2 We will maintain close links with community woodland groups in our area of the Highlands and invite CWA members and others to visit us so we can share our experiences. Opportunities for joint training will also be explored. We will contribute articles to the Reforesting Scotland magazine and the CWA newsletter on what we have learned.

#### 4.14 Summary budget

##### Activity Plan Capital cost summary

Theme	Project	Title	Description	Estimate £
A	1	Path Upgrades	To include basic path upgrades and a new path around the pond	10,000
A	1	Regular maintenance	Path maintenance for 5 yrs	1,000
A	2	People counter	To record usage	1,000
A	3	Seating	Made from local wood	500
A	4	New gates	To replace 2 kissing gates	600
B	8	Interpretation panels	To include 3 panels, maps, welcome signs and mounts	9,000
E	13	Pond development	On existing wetland area	5,500
		TOTAL		27,600

##### Activity Plan Revenue cost summary over 5 years

Theme	Project	Title	Description	Estimate £
B	5	Communication and interpretation	Development of 'house style' graphics, image etc	2,000
B	6	Website	Development	1,500
B	7	Leaflets	Interpretive materials	1,000
B	8	Interpretation Panels	Refresh in yrs. 4 -5	1,000
C	9.1	Education advice	Supply of advice to help with pack and programme	1,000
C	9.2	Education Learning resources/Pack	5 projects	1,500
D	11	Walks and talks	Supply of specialist	2,100
D	12	Youth Activities	Contribution to costs	1,250
F	15	Woodland management	See Woodland Management Plan	0
F	16	Native Tree Planting	2000 trees	1,000
G	17.1	Volunteer events	7 days per annum	1,750
(F)/G	17.2	Tools and protective clothing for volunteers	Supply of basic tools	1,500
G	18	Skills Training for volunteers	Chain saw training + cert. for 9.	5,850
G	19	Training and conferences for Board Directors	Visits to woodlands, CWA conference etc	1,500
H	20	Biological surveys	Supply of specialist surveyors	7,000

I	21	Events	5 per annum	5,000
		REVENUE TOTAL		36,950
Plus		CAPITAL TOTAL		27,600
		GRAND TOTAL		<b>64,550</b>

Plus costs of Education and Outreach Post £27.5k  
& Other Management Costs

See **Cash flow** (Five year cash flow is set out in Appendix 2/attached online)  
NB Takes over from figures in EWCC 2008 business plan 2008

## SECTION 3 - ACTION PLAN

### 5 Themes

#### 5.1 The action themes derived from community consultations are:

- A. Access
- B. Communication, sign posting and interpretation
- C. Education
- D. Informal Learning
- E. Biodiversity
- F. Woodland management
- G. Training and volunteering
- H. Recording and monitoring
- I. Community involvement and events

5.1.1. Each action is given a description, timescale, budget, risk assessment.

5.1.2 The actions take account of the rationale presented in this Activity Plan, particularly community feedback. Some will be delivered in partnership with others. They are designed to support HLF's joint aims of Learning and Participation. Some actions are relevant to several action themes but have been placed in the most relevant theme.

5.1.3 The total cost of the individual actions is estimated at **£36,950** over the five year period. **£27,600** has been identified to cover capital works, excluding costs associated with the purchase.

#### 5.2 Summary of action outputs

5.2.1 In broad terms we intend to achieve the following:

- Number of volunteer forest work hours: Year 1 = 500 (based on experience to date); Year 5 = 700)
- Number of activities and events: Year 1 = 10 (based on experience to date); Year 5 = 15
- Number of educational visits: Year 1 = 5; Year 5 = 10
- Number of person hours of staff/volunteer training: Year 1 = 100; Year 5 = 150
- Percentage people undertaking woodland event saying the overall experience of woodland events was good or very good = 85%
- Number of people participating in any educational/learning activity: Year 1 = 100; Year 5 = 200.

5.2.2 Furthermore our project will:

- Develop a high quality educational resource pack that will increase young people's understanding of their woodland heritage;
- Develop a central resource (website and own noticeboard) that provides information about the wood and that will help promote and co-ordinate all onsite activities and events.

5.2.3 Other non-quantifiable aims of our project are to:

- Offer access to all potential users to maximise use of the wood's unique environment - its natural and forest heritage;
- Provide high quality access to information about the natural and forest heritage;
- Develop training and educational opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and interests;
- Increase local pride and interest in the wood's important forest history and heritage.

5.2.4 Our activities will be spread across all five years with years 4-5 seeing consolidation work to ensure they continue after HLF support stops. It is expected additional activities will be added to the list.

## **6 Statutory permission**

6.1 Permissions relating to woodland management are included in our Woodland Management Plan. Statutory permissions (planning) may be required for items such as placement of interpretive panels (advertisement only) and the new pond, about which we will seek advice from Highland Council.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

7.1 All published materials - website, leaflets, interpretive panels etc will acknowledge HLF assistance to our project in line with HLF policy guidance. Publicity materials, media releases etc will also acknowledge HLF help.

## **8 Timetable**

8.1 The table (attached) sets out a 5-year timescale for project delivery.



## ACTION PLAN CHART

<b>Action A: Access and recreation</b>								
A well-defined and accessible path network will provide the basis for an access framework to the wood. Current barriers to access include muddy and wet ground conditions, fallen timber and over grown path surrounds. Jubilee Hall toilets will be used in the interim but working with nearby caravan park to promote and provide toilets for woodland users. Appropriate trail side seating – with a consistent low maintenance style will follow. Long term a composting toilet facility on site could be provided. A simple roofed open sided structure near cross roads as a base for events and activities is also planned (contingent on separate funding) as is the installation of people counters at two main entry points. A pressure pad people counter at entry points with a logger plus software is the most efficient way of recording overall use of the wood. The discrete counter can be moved between entry points. Data can be effectively collected, managed, compared and stored in a consistent way.								
<b>Activity</b> <b>Detailed description</b>	<b>User group(s)</b>	<b>Benefits for People:</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Costs in project budget</b>	<b>Time table</b>	<b>Targets</b> <b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Method(s) of evaluation</b>	<b>Meeting HLF Aims</b>
<b>1.1 Upgrade paths</b>  Upgrading appropriate sections of the existing track network from Camden Street to the pond and to the existing turning area as required.	All users plus those currently unable or unwilling to access the woods due to path condition	Responding to community needs. "Improve paths" was most requested improvement in community survey 2010. Disabled access also requested.	Improvements agreed by EWCC and Forestry Contractor. Local contractors will carry out the work. Most materials extracted locally in the wood.  Volunteers will manage people counters.	400m X £15/m £6000.00	Yr. 1	400m of path works  Increased levels of use and satisfaction by users. Greater usage of the woodland by all – especially those disadvantaged by poor path conditions.	Gathering feedback from users via self-completion forms and word of mouth. Use of people counters at main entry points.	P More community participation Attract new users
<b>1.2 New path</b>  A new all ability path will be formed beside pond to create circular route	All users	As above	As above	160m X £25/m £4000.00	Yr. 3	160m of new path  Increased levels of use and satisfaction by users. Greater usage of the woodland	Gathering feedback from users via self-completion forms and word of mouth.	P More community participation Attract new users
<b>1.3 Path Maintenance</b> Maintenance and repair of paths, culverts, ditches	All users	Paths remain safe and in good repair	Voluntary Labour	1500m path. Volunteers' supervision (incl. elsewhere).  £1000	Yr. 1 – Yr. 5	All woodland paths and access structures checked annually	Gathering feedback from users via self-completion forms and word of mouth. Use of people counters at main entry points	P More community participation Attract new users
<b>2 Install people counter</b>	All	Clearer picture as to usage		People counter Pressure pad Logger, £500  Software £500		Install one people counter - can be moved between sites to get a baseline		P Enables better feed-back
<b>3 Seating</b>	Mainly older people and families	Improving the experience, will allow longer walks, family gatherings	Local wood. Volunteers to be involved in construction.	£500	Yr 1-2	3 seating areas within 2 years	Word of mouth and on site monitoring	P More community participation; new users

<b>4 Gates</b>	All users	Main benefit to parents with buggies, wheelchair users, cyclists; easier access for all.	Remove existing 2 kissing gates. Replace (if required) with swing gates with latch.	£600	Yr 2	2 new gates	Word of mouth and on site monitoring	P Attract new users/more frequent visits.
<b>Total</b>				<b>£13,100</b>				

<b>Action B: Communication, sign posting and interpretation</b>								
Good information, orientation and interpretation are essential to encourage greater access to and understanding of the wood. Communication will also be used to promote aims of EWCC and membership. Welcome signs at main entrances Camden Street, Chapel and Gorge. Inside the wood 'subtle' way marking will be installed to guide people around the woods and to features within woods. The main interpretation/ orientation point for the wood will be located at the crossroads in the wood (perhaps in wooden building/shelter). A simple interpretive leaflet on the woods will be produced. Leaflet dispenser at interpretation point with donation box. User management for dogs, cycles etc. will utilise existing print items and guidance from SNH.								
<b>Activity Detailed description</b>	<b>User group(s)</b>	<b>Benefits for People:</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Costs in project budget</b>	<b>Time table</b>	<b>Targets Measures of success</b>	<b>Method(s) of evaluation</b>	<b>Meeting HLF Aims</b>
<b>5 Design and communication</b>  Develop a 'house style' of website, leaflets, panels, signs etc with agreed colours, font	All users groups and individuals	Enhanced presentation that meets best practice for all users	6 days of design and interpretive advice	£2000	Yr. 1	All design to meet best standards set out in BT Countryside for All Manual.	Effectiveness will be assessed by self-completion surveys	As above
<b>6 Website</b>  Refreshing the Evanton Wood website. Include links to partners and others as required.	All users groups and individuals.	Signage – better signage was one of the three most requested improvements requested in community survey Sept 2010	5 days of local website developer and EWCC members	Website refresh and development £1500	Yr. 1	People will report a greater awareness and understanding and increased usage of Evanton Wood and greater attendance at events. Increase membership and volunteering.	Website hits.	P &L More community participation Attract new users Provide and interpret information
<b>7 Leaflet</b>  A simple interpretive leaflet of the woods (to make visitors more aware) will be produced. Available through a dispenser on 'trail head' structure; also through letter box delivery in Evanton area. Additional more specific leaflets to be produced at later stage.	All user groups but especially local people and independent visitors from for example - caravan park.	Visitors will learn more about woodland heritage, biodiversity and maintaining the wood.	EWCC members	2/3 colour leaflet, design and print. £1000	Yr. 1	1000 A4 leaflets House to house delivery  Take up of leaflets Positive feedback from members and others. Evidence of use and greater understanding and awareness as per objectives in interpretive plan	Numbers of leaflet dispensed  Member and other feedback	As above
<b>8.1 Interpretive Panels</b>  Interpretive panels will be installed in three locations – two entry points and cross roads. Panels will include welcome message and map, plus interpretation on heritage and wildlife. Crossroads location will be on 'trail head' roofed structure.	All user groups but especially local people and independent visitors from for example - caravan park.	As above	Designer and EWCC member input to content. Map commissioned  Design and materials to be weather and vandal resistant.	Panel design, manufacture and delivery plus mountings and 'trail head' roofed structure £9000	Yr. 2/3	3 panels installed at key points  Evidence of use and greater understanding and awareness as per objectives in interpretive plan	Response from users and observation. Ad hoc surveys to record levels of satisfaction and understanding about special qualities of the woods.	As above
<b>8.2 Maintenance</b> Refresh of panels, signs etc in Yrs. 4 -5	All users groups and individuals	As above 5		£1000	Yr. 4-5	All installations to be maintained in good condition	Member and other feedback	As above
<b>Total</b>				<b>£14500</b>				

<b>Action C: Formal Education</b>								
The wood offers diverse, easily accessible woodland as a topic source and location for a wide variety of more 'formal' educational opportunities. The new Curriculum for Excellence offer greater opportunities for applied outdoor learning. The wood is already used by local school children, college students from Inverness and youth groups like Scouts and Guides. Longer term to install infrastructures to help groups make better use the wood including a covered shelter and toilet facilities. We will use learning resources provided by groups like the FEI. HLF funding is sought to provide groups with additional support. All will be free of charge but voluntary contributions will be sought towards costs.								
<b>Activity Detailed description</b>	<b>User group(s)</b>	<b>Benefits for People:</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Costs in project budget</b>	<b>Time table</b>	<b>Targets Measures of success</b>	<b>Method(s) of evaluation</b>	<b>Meeting HLF Aims</b>
<b>9.1 Educational Advisor</b>  To help prepare educational packs	Targeted at school groups – in line with 5 levels and 4 capacities in the Curriculum for Excellence.	4 days advice on developing and preparing packs and activities in line with Curriculum for Excellence.	4 days from educational advisor	5 x £320  = £1600		As above	As above	As above
<b>9.2 Education Pack</b>  Prepare 5 project based learning resources specific to the wood, for use by groups – including woodland work, web links, photos, video interviews plus work and activity sheets.		5 Project based themes may include: sustainable role that trees and timber play in our lives; International nature of forestry and its role in society; Douglas Fir (link between the tree and wood products), Gaelic Alphabet and place names, Evanton wood culture and heritage	Advice from educational sources – local teachers and Rangers. To be compiled by Education and Outreach Coordinator	5 x £300  =£1500	Yr. 1	Pack used by 50 children per annum to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors	Feedback from teachers and learning resource users	As above
<b>10 Educational Events</b>  Increase use of the wood by formal educational groups through supporting the work of activity leaders.	Kiltearn Primary and Evanton Playgroup  Others tba	Opportunity for children to be outside, exploring and learning about their environment, doing practical tasks fulfilling criteria for Curriculum for Excellence, and provide material for working in class.	Community artist	£130 ½ day * 8 pa 1040 pa  = £5200	Yr. 1 – Yr. 5	Annually 6 –10 groups in wood per year Positive feedback from schools – enjoyment, learning, work produced afterwards. Children visiting woods with friends and family in their own time.	Feedback from children/ students and group leaders, teachers lecturers	P&L Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills Provide, and interpret, information
	Alness Academy or other secondary schools (in or out of school)	Learning about biodiversity and developing a responsible interest in the recreational, environmental and social benefits arising from woodland.	4 * ½ days Bush craft specialist pa	@ £150 £600 £3000 Of which half from schools contribs) = £1500		2 groups in wood per year. Positive feedback from schools - bush craft skills gained		
	Scottish School of Forestry Inverness College (UHI)	Forestry students to learn about continuous cover forestry and community woodland management.	College lecturers, forestry consultant,		0 n/a		Annually 1 -2 parties per year.	

	Local special needs groups St Clements, Isobel Rhind Centre & Key Housing	Taking very accessible health, well-being opportunities in the woodland. Follow-up arts activity.	Community artist	3 full days pa @ £260 £780 pa £3900		Annually 1 -2 parties per year.		
	Youth groups Scouts/Guides	Safe accessible, welcoming environment for young people to use for activities.	4 half days Bush craft specialist	@ £200 £800 = £4000		4 youth group visits per annum. Contribution 'in house' accredited 'badge' type activities and to schemes like D of E and JMA. Bush craft skills gained		
<b>Total</b>				£17,700				

<b>Action D: Informal learning</b>								
The wood has a unique forest heritage. The site history and management of wood and biodiversity and how they have contributed to the make-up of wood today offer considerable research and learning opportunities. See Activity 6 for cultural management issues. Developing opportunities for health walks by matching walks with distance and aerobic challenge. The woods can also contribute to mental and social well-being. Discussions with local health centre will make them aware of path facility offered in the woods. Health walks may require attention to path surfaces and appropriate seating, if these prove to be significant barriers to further use of the site.								
<b>Activity Detailed description</b>	<b>User group(s)</b>	<b>Benefits for People:</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Costs in project budget</b>	<b>Time table</b>	<b>Targets Measures of success</b>	<b>Method(s) of evaluation</b>	<b>Meeting HLF Aims</b>
<b>11 Guided walks and talks</b>  On site walks and demonstrations. Winter talks and lectures. Examples might include guided dawn chorus walks, fungal forays, use of forest products, forest management and bushcraft.	Local walking groups, forestry groups and students, secondary school pupils (rural skills students), EWCC members, local people with physical or mental health issues.	Learning about the woodland enhances enjoyment of walking in the wood and may encourage people to visit and use other woods.  Physical and mental well-being is enhanced by learning in and about woodland settings.	Specialists like Forestry Consultant to explain woodland management and history. Bird expert to identify bird song. Local history specialist. Will book local hall for talks and prepare promotional materials	Av. £70 per walk or talk  20 walks = £1400  <u>Plus</u>  10 talks @ av £70 = £700	Yr. 1 – Yr. 5	4 guided walks per year  2 talks/lectures per years  Intend to attract 15-25 per walk and 20-30 per talk.  85% of people undertaking woodland event saying the overall experience was good or very good	Report on numbers attending	L More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills Attract new users Provide, and interpret, information
<b>12.1 Activities: Youth</b>  Out of school	Local teenagers	Confidence building, learning skills, bonding, health	Collaborate with Evanton Youth Enterprise and local Youth Service.  Local bushcraft specialist.	£500 pa = £2500		5 events/activities pa. Attendance by av 8.	Group responses and individual feedback	More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills
<b>12.2 Activities: Other</b>	Varied age groups	Physical and mental well-being, confidence building, learning	Varied specialists	£500 pa = £2,500		c 5 sessions pa	Individual and group response	As above
<b>Total</b>				£6,100				

### Action E: Biodiversity management

To maintain and enhance the biodiversity requires diversity of habitat structure, tree species and age distribution. Removal of Western Hemlock regeneration has already started using volunteers. This will be an on-going activity that also provides opportunities for straight forward but rewarding community engagement events plus training in use of hand tools. For invertebrates key parts of the woodland are clearings and edges where sunlight and warmth can penetrate. Dead wood is an important part of the habitat mix. Ground flora also requires light to develop. Open water and wet areas benefit from light to encourage growth of water plants and an overall increase in water temperature. Areas of bare ground – up turned tree root plates for example are an important part of diverse habitats.

Activity Detailed description	User group(s)	Benefits for People:	Resources	Costs in project budget	Time table	Targets Measures of success	Method(s) of evaluation	Meeting HLF Aims
<b>13 Pond Construction</b>  Management of wetlands and water features on the site through a pond feature based on existing wetland area. Use of a sluice system will allow control of water levels. Removal of tree growth surrounding wetland areas will allow greater control of the leaf burden currently inhibiting the existing site.	All woodland users	Enhanced opportunities to see and experience a diverse range of habitats and species. Generally the greater the diversity the more attractive an area is for people to visit and spend time in.  Awareness of need for negotiated balance between aesthetic value and biodiversity	Contractor and volunteers guided by Forestry consultant and biodiversity specialists	£5500	Yr. 2	Enhancement of pond  Pond will deliver enjoyment to people and benefits to biodiversity	Survey work  Fixed point photography to show site before and after.	P&L More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills Provide, and interpret, information
<b>14 Other</b> Erecting nest boxes (specialist boxes for spotted fly catcher and starlings), bat boxes. Possible extension of feeding to other species like red squirrels and birds with simple screening (not a hide) to afford closer viewing opportunities	All woodland users	Enhanced opportunities to see and experience a diverse range of species. Generally the greater the diversity the more attractive an area is for people to visit and spend time in.	Volunteers	Nil required	Yr 1-5	Increased sightings	Monitoring by volunteers	P&L More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills
<b>Total</b>				<b>£5500</b>				

### Action F: Woodland management

Continuous cover low impact forestry has been practiced in the wood for over 100 years. The Management Plan sets out the detailed process and mechanism. Longer term EWCC wish to secure a building at cross-roads to store equipment for volunteer woodland management. Biodiversity will be improved by planting native species of trees and shrubs. The wood also supports a range of cultural sites and references. These will be formally recorded and management action taken where required. See Appendix F for a more detailed inventory of cultural connections.

Activity Detailed description	User group(s)	Benefits for People:	Resources	Costs in project budget	Time table	Targets Measures of success	Method(s) of evaluation	Meeting HLF Aims
<b>15 Woodland Management</b>  To carry out tasks identified in attached Woodland Management Plan	Specifically volunteers	Community support for long term management Timber sales Fire wood production	Advice from Forestry Consultant  Volunteers in appropriate tasks  Tools and equipment	0 (Costed in Management Plan, funded by sales etc.)	Yr. 1 –Yr. 5	Effective, efficient and economic management of Evanton Wood in the community interest.	Effective management.  Resubmission of woodland to RSF Society Woodland Award scheme.	P&L More community participation Create opportunities for people to gain new skills
<b>16 Planting Native Trees and shrubs</b>  To improve biodiversity	Specifically volunteers And educational groups	Understanding biodiversity and taking part in its promotion	Advice from Forestry Consultant Tools and equipment	2000 tree @ £0.50 each  £1000	Yr. 1 –Yr. 5	Plant 2000 native species trees	Area planted	As above
<b>Total</b>				£1000				

### Action G: Training and Volunteering

Volunteers are a vital element of our project and the EWCC intend to invest in, and develop, the skills of volunteers and others in woodland management. As part of induction all volunteers will be made aware of health and safety requirements. Further committed volunteers will undergo specific chainsaw training to permit more advanced woodland management to be undertaken. This will include basic first aid. We would explore opportunities to carry out joint training with other community woodland groups. Other training activities are specified Action 3 project 9 (Management and governance) and Action 8 project 17 ( Biological survey work)

Activity Detailed description	User group(s)	Benefits for People:	Resources	Costs in project budget	Time table	Targets Measures of success	Method(s) of evaluation	Meeting HLF Aims
<b>17.1 Volunteer Work Days</b>  Hold volunteer work party days to carry out woodland management activities clearing western hemlock. Sorting firewood and clean path verges and drains.	Families and individuals from Evanton and elsewhere (as per evidence to date)  Retired people  BTCV and other volunteer groups.	Exercise, meeting people, learning about forest management, seeing results of their work that day and in years ahead.	Volunteer days guided by Forestry consultant. Refreshments provided for volunteers.	Av £50 per volunteer event  £350 pa = £1750	Yr. 1 – Yr. 5	7 volunteer event days work per annum with c15-20 volunteers including children. Work completed, good atmosphere, people come back to next session. 85% of people undertaking woodland event saying the overall experience was good or very good	Report on numbers attending.  Regular review meetings and advance recces.  Feedback forms and/or record people's comments as they leave.	P&L More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills Attract new users
<b>17.2 Purchase tools</b>  Basic hand tools and some protective clothing	As above	Local people learn basic tool handling skills and safety requirements.		£1500	Yr. 1	Sufficient tools for all volunteers	As above	As above
<b>18 Skills Training</b>  Training for 9 volunteers for basic chain saw course;  Path maintenance          First Aid	As above	Local people receive vocational skills to help with woodland management and later with firewood arrangements. (Forestry training also requested in community survey Sept 2010)  Our ambition is to involve some people in Forest Schools Training   Knowledge of Emergency First Aid will benefit individuals potentially all around them	Instructor from Scottish School of Forestry      FC and Paths for All Courses  CWA Courses  Volunteer work parties: supervision/training	Chainsaw: £150 per day pp. 3 day course £450 pp. Chainsaw assessment £200 pp. Total £650 pp. = £5850	Yr. 1 – Yr. 2	9 people trained and assessed in basic chainsaw use. (CS30 – Maintain and Operate the Chain saw CS31 – Fell & Process Small Trees CS32 – Fell and process Medium Size trees)	Report on numbers achieving chainsaw qualifications	As above

<p><b>19 Other Training</b></p> <p>Training for EWCC directors and other volunteers in community organisation management attend CWA, FEI conferences and training events and learning journeys to other sites.</p>	<p>EWCC members and volunteers</p>	<p>Development of management skills of benefit to EWCC and wider community.</p>	<p>Support from Community Woodland Association</p>	<p>£300 pa for 5 years £1500</p>	<p>Yr. 1 – Yr. 5</p>	<p>Attend CWA and FEI conferences. Visits to 1 other community woodland site per annum. Directors and other volunteers will have greater skills in managing a community woodland organisation</p>	<p>Report back to EWCC AGM</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p><b>Total</b></p>				<p>£10,600</p>				

### Action H: Recording and surveying

It is neither desirable nor even possible to record everything that exists in the woods. Some groups will be very easy to record by interested amateurs - trees, mammals, vascular plants. Other groups require much greater specialist knowledge just for accurate identification. For all groups, even to get a superficial idea of the species present, several visits throughout the year will be required to accommodate the often very limited active season of invertebrates, flowering times, and the migration habits of birds. In the longer term transects or other fixed survey mechanisms may be employed to measure change in the woods.

We are applying for HLF support for part of recording and surveying activities. Independently of the activities we have sought funding for local people and interested other parties from the groups mentioned will be helping to gather biodiversity information.

Activity Detailed description	User group(s)	Benefits for People:	Resources	Costs in project budget	Time table	Targets Measures of success	Method(s) of evaluation	Meeting HLF Aims
<p><b>20 Bio blitz events and recording surveys</b></p> <p>Biannual bio blitz events with training on survey equipment.</p> <p>Ongoing recording on seasonal basis.</p>	Anyone interested local people, local schools, field clubs, local college students and academics,	<p>Help local people to have knowledge of, pride and wonderment in the range of biodiversity living in their local woods.</p> <p>Local people and schoolchildren learning to identify species, gain skills in survey techniques and learn about biodiversity.</p> <p>To create a record of biodiversity in the wood.</p> <p>Identify any more BAP species occurring in the wood</p> <p>Working with local groups and primary school groups.</p>	Surveyors and specialists from Highland Biological Recording Group, Inverness Bat Group, SWT Inner Moray Firth Group. RSPB Local Members Group, Butterfly and fungi specialists	£700 per survey	Yr. 1 – Yr. 5	<p>Av 2 events per year (potentially 4 in each of first 2 years) = 10 in total</p> <p>Established links with database holders and establish survey transects in the wood.</p> <p>Survey results on EWCC website when recorded and accredited records submitted to national and regional databases.</p>	Record for each biological group People learning about the range of biodiversity in their local environment and how the system of continuous cover management has allowed this biodiversity to develop.	<p>P&amp;L</p> <p>More community participation</p> <p>Host learning events/activities</p> <p>Create opportunities for people to gain new skills</p> <p>Provide, and interpret, information</p>
<b>Total</b>				£7000				

### Action I: Community involvement and events

Events in the wood potentially involve the whole community and bring a diverse set of people together, encouraging conversation and dialogue. Events allow people to catch up on news and information that must circulate through a community to maintain its vitality. Well organised events create a safe and invigorating environment where young and old, long-time residents and newcomers can mix and maybe get to know each other a bit. Events provide a bridge for people to get involved and in the wood and appreciate the changing seasons.

Activity Detailed description	User group(s)	Benefits for People:	Resources	Costs in project budget	Time table	Targets Measures of success	Method(s) of evaluation	Meeting HLF Aims
<b>21 Events</b>  Typical events might be  1 Spring /Easter event,  2 Summer acoustic music event,  3 Autumn sponsored cycle  4 Halloween  5 Winter carol service	Families and interested others mainly living in in Evanton	Enjoying being outside in lovely environment of Evanton Wood with other people from Evanton and getting to know new people.  Fun, exercise, fresh air, getting to know Evanton Wood better, feel good factor for community.	Community volunteers and some paid assistance for art, music etc.	£200 per event  5 per year	Yr. 1- Yr. 5	5 community events per year 25 in total  @ 50+ people attending per event.  Becoming established on community calendar.  85% of people undertaking woodland event saying the overall experience was good or very good	Evaluation meeting within a couple of days of the event.  Self-completion feedback forms/recording people's comments at end of day.  Using people counters to assess if more people are visiting wood on their own after events.	P&L More community participation Host learning events/activities Create opportunities for people to gain new skills Attract new users Provide, and interpret, information
<b>Total</b>				£5000				



## **Appendix A: Evanton Wood Background**

Located in East Ross, Evanton Wood comprises 64 hectares of planned woodland dating from the late 19th century. The wood provides the backdrop to the village of Evanton, which was laid out in 1807 as a planned settlement, although most development dates from the Victorian period. Designed on an unusual triangular grid, it has since developed along the B817 in a more dispersed layout, and there are larger dwellings along Swordale Road backing onto the woods. Enclosed by open agricultural land and Evanton Wood, the village is divided by the wooded slopes of the River Glass.

Evanton Wood has a history of public access and is a key informal recreation area for the village generating perhaps 30 daily visits right throughout the year. The wood also provides access to the unique feature that is the Black Rock Gorge, a spectacular narrow ravine that in 2004 was a location for the film “Harry Potter and Goblet of Fire”. A database on places of interest in Evanton Wood is being compiled (Appendix G).

In a Scottish forestry heritage context Evanton Wood is regarded as an outstanding example of continuous cover forestry. Although predominantly a coniferous woodland, the management of Evanton Wood over the last century has resulted in a stand structure that is atypical of conventional conifer woodland in Scotland and the UK. In many respects it represents the type of woodland that the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 aspires to create with its wide range of species and age classes creating an environment that is visually pleasing and has a higher biodiversity value than a conventional coniferous plantation.

Whilst maintaining stands of productive conifers capable of producing a sustainable supply of quality timber, the woodland provides a wide range of habitats and micro-habitats attractive to a range of species including European Protected Species (EPS) and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) species. Tree cover of varying degrees will have existed on the site for many generations and there will have been many influences over the previous century that have resulted in this diverse woodland but there are two principal factors that stand out as highly influential .

- Evanton Wood has a unique connection to the early years of professional forestry training and the implementation of systematic forest management in the United Kingdom and it is one of only a few examples where continuous cover forestry techniques have been applied over a prolonged period.
- The present structure of the woodland is a result of the forest design principles implemented by Sir William Schlich who prepared the first written plan for the woodlands on Novar Estate for Viscount Novar in 1899.

An eminent German Forester, Schlich worked extensively in India for the British administration before being appointed as one of the first professors of forestry in Great Britain in 1885. Founder of the School of Forestry at Oxford in 1905 and, as an advocate of systematic forest management systems with written management plans, Schlich had a major impact on British forestry around the turn of the 20th century. He

is a 'father' figure in modern British forestry and his influence was world-wide. A statue at the School of Forestry in Oxford celebrates his role.

He wrote a five volume Manual of Forestry, advancing the use of modern forest management that went on to become the standard and enduring textbook for subsequent generations of forestry students. It was in the late 1890's, more than twenty years before the formation of the Forestry Commission, that Schlich first visited Novar and Evanton Wood. At that time many of the woodlands in the northeast of Scotland, including Novar, had been severely damaged by storms resulting in significant clearance and replanting works being required.

Schlich's systematic approach to replanting laid the foundations for the woodland that exists in Evanton Wood today. The introduction of non-native species such as Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, and Beech of German origin alongside the traditional Scotch Fir (Scots Pine) and Larch was instrumental in creating the diverse woodland environment that presently delivers a wide range of benefits and continues to provide a wide range of management options.

In addition to Schlich's early work, the introduction of a continuous cover forestry system was instrumental in the development of Evanton Wood to its current condition. This type of management, currently referred to as a Low Impact Silvicultural System, was embraced by Mr A.B.L. Munro Ferguson, nephew of Viscount Novar, when he became laird of Novar in 1951. Munro Ferguson, an Aberdeen forestry graduate, continued this type of management where thinning and selective felling was carried out to encourage natural regeneration with the overstorey being gradually removed as the regeneration developed.

This system worked very well and from 1950's to the present, the structure of the woodland began to change with natural regeneration developing as the older crops were thinned and gradually removed, resulting in a mixed woodland with a wide range of species and age classes.

This sensitive approach to management was carried out throughout a period when conventional woodland management became increasingly focussed on a clear-fell and replant regime. It was only in the late 1980's/early 90's when greater awareness of the wider benefits that woodland management could deliver in terms of biodiversity, landscape and recreation that forest policy in the UK began to seriously consider the wider use of Low Impact Silvicultural Systems.

This integrated approach to management was recognised in 2003 when Evanton Wood won the Management of Small Woodlands category in the Scottish Finest Woodlands awards. With its fine stands of timber growing in a diverse environment, Evanton Wood is a good example of woodland managed under such a system and, over a century after Professor Schlich first saw the wood, it is regularly visited by present day forestry students and interested parties seeking to find out more about forest heritage in the UK and to learn about alternative types of woodland management and their wide ranging benefits.

Student groups from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and St Andrews Universities have visited the wood regularly, and students from the Scottish School of Forestry at Culloden, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, have visited the wood annually for over 25 years as part of their Silvicultural Systems training. The Forestry School has strong links with other training organisations throughout Europe and beyond, and this has resulted in groups of students from many countries including a visit to Evanton Wood during tours of Scotland and the UK.

The Forestry Commission held a training course in Low Impact Silviculture for their field staff in 2002 and the Continuous Cover Forestry Group held a workshop for private woodland managers in Evanton Wood around the same time. The International Union of Forest Research Organisations visited in 1999. In recent years Evanton Wood has been visited by a wide range of groups and individuals including MSP's and many representatives of the Forestry Commission including Chairmen, Chief Executive, various Conservators and other field staff.

With its continuity of management and strong historical links to Professor Schlich and his legacy of forest management planning and training in the UK, Evanton Wood is a valuable woodland heritage resource with the potential to continue its on-going contribution to the training of woodland managers for many more generations.

In understanding Evanton Wood and the opportunities to develop activities to involve more people, it is also essential to understand the current ownership by Novar Estate and the community of Evanton.

Novar Estate, incorporating agricultural and forestry land, is privately owned and operated as a commercial enterprise. Extending to 20,000 acres Novar Estate, once described as a barren and treeless place, was transformed in the 18th century by Sir Hector Munro who, on his return from service with the East India Company, improved the farmland, drained marshes and planted trees in vast numbers as well as reconstructing Novar House to be a classical Georgian square.

## **Appendix B: Evanton Wood Fit with Stage 1 Proposals**

### **B 1 Business Plan**

A business plan for community acquisition & management of Evanton Wood was compiled by Campbell Consulting (Highland) Ltd. The final report dated November 2008 was updated in part by EWCC board in November 2010.

### **B 2 Woodland Management Plan**

The following addendum has been made to the 2009 Woodland Management Plan:

#### **Evanton Wood Community Company Woodland Management Plan 2009 – 2014 Addendum to Management Plan October 2011**

The Management Plan for Evanton Wood “*Evanton Wood Community Company Woodland Management Plan 2009 – 2014*” was prepared in 2008 as part of the application to raise funds for the purchase of the woodland through the Big Lottery Fund.

This application proved to be unsuccessful and almost resulted in the winding up of the Community Group during 2009, however at an Extraordinary General Meeting following the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2009 the Board of Directors stood down and were replaced by a new board to pursue the approved motion: “*That the company should apply for funding to look into other ways of purchasing Evanton Wood for the benefit of the community.*”

The new board of directors successfully sourced funding to allow alternative means of purchase to be explored and are currently preparing the second stage of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund having successfully negotiated the more difficult first stage.

The Woodland Management Plan remains a key element of this application but there have been several changes both directly related to the management of the wood and also indirectly in the wider forestry and rural development sector that will have an influence on on-going management, and therefore need to be taken account of in this addendum to the Management Plan.

#### **Aims & Objectives**

The principal aims and objectives of EWCC ownership remain unchanged but key community ownership outcomes have been clarified:-

- Evanton Wood will remain **a special place** for people and wildlife (something that could not be guaranteed under private ownership).
- The woodland will be **more than just trees** as biodiversity flourishes and increases.
- **Room to enjoy** as the woodland offers more low key informal recreation to all.

- **Improving knowledge** within the Community in a woodland learning environment.
- **Looking after our woodland heritage** with many management operations being carried out by volunteers.
- The woodland will be **part of a network** of habitats and village paths linking woodland places in Ross-shire.

## **Constraints & Opportunities**

### **Nature Conservation Designations**

Since the Management Plan was prepared the Site of Special Scientific Interest status of the Black Rock Gorge has been removed. The site was de-notified in 2010 as the qualifying features were no longer in favourable condition and work required to recover favourable condition was impracticable within the site boundaries.

Although the designated site was outwith the proposed purchase area, it was close enough that certain operations carried out in the vicinity of the site would have required consent from Scottish Natural Heritage. This is no longer the case.

### **Public Access**

The Highland Core Path Network has now been implemented by Highland Council and the main tracks within Evanton Wood linking the village with the Black Rock Gorge and the wider Glenglass area are identified as Core Paths.

It is the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that safe access is provided to the public at all times on these designated routes and this has implications on certain management operations. Particular care will be required during harvesting operations with appropriate management of access including liaison with users, signage and alternative routes being provided.

### **Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)**

The SRDP is a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland during the period 2007 – 2013. Individuals and groups can apply for support to help deliver the Government's strategic objectives in rural Scotland.

It was belatedly introduced in April 2008 and suffered from many early difficulties associated with its complex application process. The existing Management Plan was prepared during this period of uncertainty and although much of the application process remains complex and bureaucratic, there have been improvements and the application process and range of support measures available are clearer and more predictable in terms of the likelihood of a successful application.

There are many options within the wide suite of grants available for woodland management that would be suitable to Evanton Wood however, with the exception of the Land Managers Options (LMO), the grants are discretionary and although the likelihood of a successful application is high, it cannot be guaranteed until the application process has been completed.

The only funding that does not involve the discretionary approach is the aforementioned LMO. This is a non-competitive scheme within which each agricultural/forestry business has a maximum yearly allowance available to spend on a range of options, which in the case of Evanton Wood could include training and skills development, access creation for sustainable forest management and enhancing access.

The yearly allowance for Evanton Wood would be approximately £2400 but the payment rates do vary from 50% for access creation to 75% for training and enhancing access and are based on the production of actual invoices.

The most suitable options for funding for management works within Evanton Wood remain the Sustainable Management of Forests which could potentially provide an annual contribution towards costs of £3400 although it would have to be demonstrated that this equated to the net cost of carrying out an agreed programme of work. This work programme could include many operations that may be carried out by volunteers including small scale non-productive thinning, re-spacing (including removal of Western Hemlock), pruning, small scale tree planting & path maintenance.

In 2008 it was a requirement that to access these grants, an approved Forest Plan must be in place, however that requirement has changed slightly and woodlands less than 100ha only require a basic management plan template to be completed to allow access to the funding.

Owners of woodlands less than 100ha are still eligible to apply for the Forest Plan Preparation Grant should they so choose and it may be that there are other benefits to be gained by preparing a full plan such as eligibility for the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme and this is an approach that should be considered in the event of ownership.

### **Timber Markets**

There have been significant developments in the market for timber sales since 2008 which should be beneficial to the management of Evanton Wood. The Management Plan referred to the emerging markets related to wood-fuel at both a local small scale level and the larger industrial scale. Some of these markets have matured, rapidly increasing the demand and value of the lower grade produce from timber operations. Most significant has been the opening of the Balcas Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP) and Pellet Mill in 2009 at Invergordon. Demand for raw material for this large scale development has significantly increased demand and prices for small diameter timber and other timber residues, thereby improving the economics of harvesting operations in the North of Scotland.

The pellet plant is supplying an increasing number of boilers in public and domestic properties as the increasing cost of conventional energy such as oil and electricity has resulted in users converting to biomass.

In addition to an increasing demand for wood chip and pellets there has been an increased demand in timber in the form of firewood logs with many local merchants struggling to cope with demand. This general increase in timber as a fuel is expected to continue following the introduction of the UK Governments Renewable Heat Incentive which provides long term financial support to encourage a greater uptake in installations providing renewable heat.

Whilst the wider timber market for sawlogs and other higher value timber products will remain cyclical, being affected by a wide range of factors including global demand for timber products, exchange rates, and UK house-building, the foundations are in place to ensure that demand for the smaller diameter and lower quality produce remains strong creating the opportunity for a local firewood supply chain to be developed from Evanton Wood.

There are various levels to which a supply chain could be developed including a fully integrated approach involving felling, extraction, processing, seasoning and delivery of a finished product to the customer or, at its most basic level, the supply chain could be as simple as produce resulting from small scale thinning and re-spacing operations carried out by volunteers being presented for collection within the wood.

Clearly an opportunity exists for the development of the local firewood market in conjunction with ownership of Evanton Wood however the scale and type of

operation would have to be considered in relation to the availability of resources such as suitable equipment and appropriately skilled labour.

### **Management Prescriptions and Rational**

The decision by Novar Estate to carry out thinning operations within Evanton Wood during the winter 2011 – 12 is a significant development. Whilst such an operation should not impact upon the communities long term aims and objectives of ownership, it will have a significant impact on the proposed work programme and anticipated income during the early years of ownership.

The indicative budget prepared as part of the Management Plan assumed a similar thinning operation in the first year of ownership with an anticipated net income of almost £11000. Once thinning operations have been carried out by Novar, this income will clearly not be available to the Community, and if the proposals laid out in the Management Plan are followed it will be seven years before the next rotational thinning will be due.

The indicative budget has been amended to take into account this change.

### **Volunteer Labour & Community Participation**

A significant development relating to the on-going management of the woodland has been the introduction of “*Volunteer Work Days*”. Three volunteer days were held in the spring/early summer of 2011 with the principal aim of encouraging members of the community to get actively involved in the management of the wood, but also to assess the potential for volunteer labour from within the community.

These days proved to be hugely successful with good numbers of volunteers turning out despite some poor weather conditions. The volunteers were tasked with removing young Western Hemlock from around other more desirable tree species using hand tools, (a form of re-spacing), and also with the clearance of some roadside ditches.

Whilst achieving the principal aim of encouraging participation, the days also proved extremely productive with significant areas of Western Hemlock being cleared. This has resulted in increased confidence within the Board of Directors over what can be achieved with volunteer labour.

There is no doubt that there are further areas of Western Hemlock that could be tackled by volunteers, but such a labour force would also be suitable for a range of maintenance operations that would be eligible for grant support if included as part of an agreed work programme in an SRDP application.

In addition to the re-spacing work, tree planting, monitoring regeneration, pruning and footpath maintenance are some other important management operations that could be carried out by volunteers whilst hopefully attracting grant support, but at the same time reducing the risks associated with the discretionary funding process.

Over and above the volunteer days there has been several other activity days within the wood that demonstrate willingness within the Community to learn about the woodland and to participate in woodland related activities.

There have been several guided walks focussed on a range of topics including woodland management, ornithology, bats and moths. There have also been several successful family events held to encourage youngsters to become involved in the woodland.

In 2010 all classes from Kiltearn Primary School including the pre-school children visited the woodland accompanied by Forestry Consultant Cameron Ross to learn about the woodland. Following their visit, pupils in class 4/5 produced a fund raising Art Booklet under the supervision of local artist Lizzie MacDougall. This booklet has been successfully used to raise awareness of the proposed purchase within the local business community.

## **Summary**

In summary there have been several important developments relating to the management of Evanton Wood since the preparation of the Management Plan in 2008. Many of these developments have been, and will continue to be beneficial to the Community Group in the event of ownership.

The thinning operation being carried out by Novar Estate could have been a significant setback but the emergence of a volunteer workforce capable of dealing with many of the basic management requirements will help to keep maintenance costs low and, with the potential to attract SRDP funding for this, could actually turn the volunteer workforce into an income stream.

Whilst it is always difficult to predict future timber prices, there is confidence within the wider industry that demand for timber is increasing and therefore, as potential owners of Evanton Wood, the Group can be confident that a ready market will exist in the future for their timber products in whatever form they decide to offer them in.

### **B 3 Access Planning**

Access Planning followed the 2007 HLF Guidelines for Access Plans, and reflected the requirements and guidelines of:

- BT Countryside for All Standards and Guidelines (1997);
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) Scotland;
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; and
- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

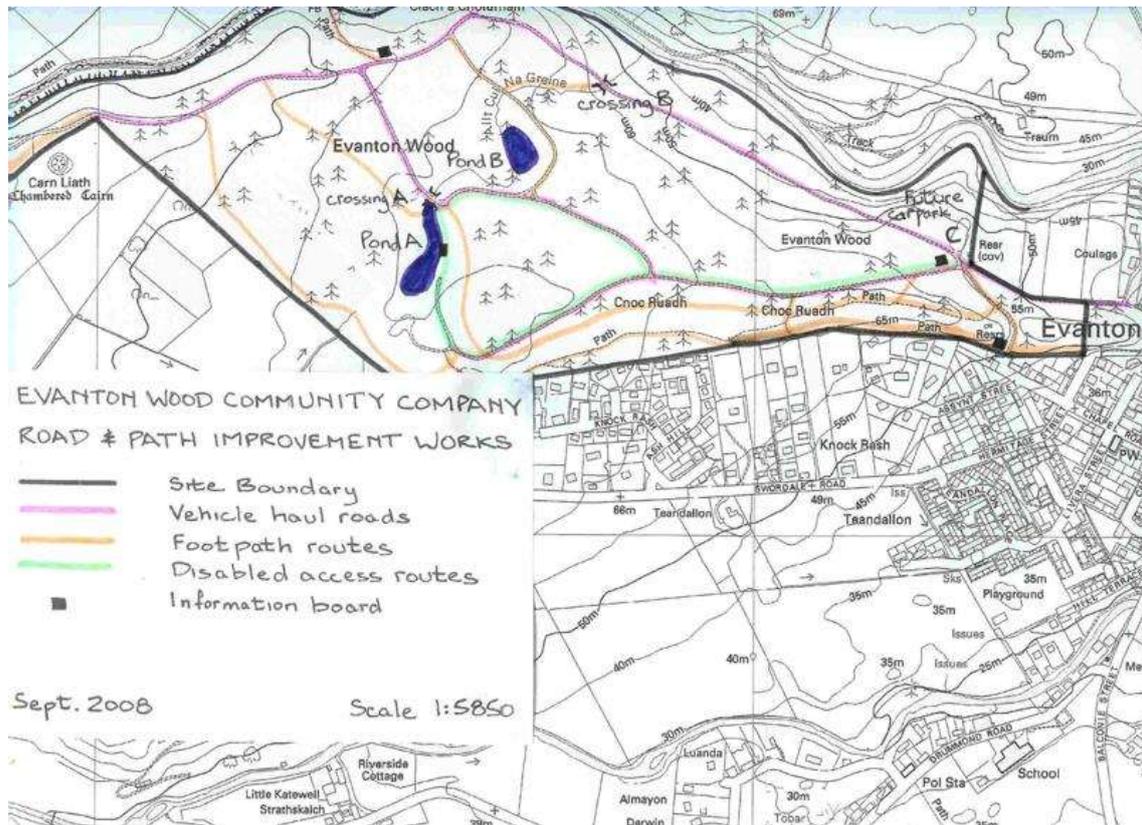
Access Planning includes an audit of access carried out by EWCC Board Directors under the following headings:

- information provision;
- access to the woodland;
- access around the woodland – path conditions ;
- access to facilities;

#### **Access Policy**

Access policy defines the EWCC policy for access, and access proposals outline how to improve access provision at Evanton Wood. The proposed improvements reflect the findings of audience / community consultation, site appraisals and woodland management.

- The EWCC is committed to the principal of improving physical and intellectual access both to and within Evanton Woods;
- Evanton Woods will provide access for all people including those who have walking difficulties, those with sensory impairments, learning or cognitive difficulties and wheelchair users;
- Signage will be upgraded to provide greater accessibility and a welcoming and positive arrival experience for all woodland users;
- The EWCC is committed to the removal of barriers to access to Evanton Wood and its facilities within the context of a managed woodland setting and within natural and cultural heritage considerations / legislation;
- The EWCC is and will continue to consult with users, non-users, staff and other stakeholders in developing the Access Plan;



## Access Proposals

Evanton Wood Community Company Outline Access Plan (September 2008). This sets out proposals for access work. The EWCC is only applying to HLF for part of the estimated costs of this work.

### 1. Overall Access Objectives

- To immediately prioritise increased use of the wood based on its existing infrastructure, through minor improvements and upgrades and promotion of walking routes.
- To establish links and partnerships with a wide range of local and area organisations and facilitate their use of the woods. In particular, to forge a strong partnership with the Ross & Cromarty Access Officer and the Core Routes programme.
- Once a stronger user base is established, to assess appropriate new facilities that would further enhance and diversify use of the wood, and to research and implement as appropriate.

#### 1.1 Short term (phase 1: years 1-3)

- Increase the level of usage of the wood by pedestrians, visiting either as groups or individuals, through improved signage and promotion;
- Improve ease of access in the parts of the wood that are currently served by paths, by improving the existing infrastructure (e.g. more even surfaces, widening some paths) and working towards some all-abilities sections;

- Encourage exploration and use of a larger area of the woodland by providing orientation at the entrance to the wood, and pathway marking and information about different route options;
- Manage wind blow in the walking areas to ensure adequate health and safety for users and to reduce the visual impact.

## **1.2 Long term (phase 2: years 4+)**

- Improve the provision for all abilities by creating car access via Camden Street, and limited parking near the woodland entrance, restricted to disabled users by means of a radar gate;
- Improve facilities within the wood for users, such as construction of a compost toilet, picnic area, 'see and do' trail and observation hide;
- Research the potential for appropriate mountain bike routes which will not conflict with walkers.

## **2. Development and Action Plan**

The following plan incorporates guidance taken from Dorothy Stott, Planning Officer and Phil Waite, Ross & Cromarty Access Officer, both of the Highland Council.

The main circular route (forest road) in the wood is to be designated a core path – formal confirmation of these routes will take place when all objections are resolved. No objections have been lodged regarding this route.

### **2.1 Upgrade of existing paths**

Aim: to make the core path and “red” paths more user friendly by removing waterlogged and muddy areas, repair or upgrade drainage where necessary and demarcate the edge of path more clearly.

#### Considerations

Condition of core path route (i.e. the main circular forest road): the damage from recent extraction is largely surface damage. There appears to be no drainage damage, apart from the broken culvert at the burn crossing, and puddled areas could be remedied with in-fill. There is a small amount of seepage from adjacent banks in places, but this is considered minimal.

#### Integration with forest operations:-

- Need to allow for heavy vehicular access along forest road – would recommend that initially carry out a substantial extraction exercise and then no further extraction for the next 5 years.
- Leave any path work till after the initial forest work.
- Keep all-abilities high-spec finish away from the main road circuit.

#### Action

- In-fill ruts, pot-holes and puddled areas with rough grade gravel e.g. off the back of a tractor.
- Scrape and re-grade the path to level and provide more even surface suitable for pedestrian use.
- Two new culverts, or small bridges, would have to be installed at the points where the burn crosses the path, one of these being next to the lochan. Old

culverts would need digging out. The culvert option would be slightly cheaper than a bridge.

- A sluice may also be needed at the lochan, depending on the maximum flow rates during the year.

#### Planning

Not required – if it follows the same line as existing path, and is only surface works and drainage.

No budget is available from the Core Paths project for immediate improvement to path condition. There could possibly be support to undertake on-going path maintenance in future.

## **2.2 Scope for introducing all abilities sections**

Aim: where practical to enable paths to be used by as wide a user ability as possible.

#### Considerations

- The steepest section on the main core path loop, just after passing the lochan, would be suitable for push chair and motorised wheelchair/buggy users, but not for manual wheel chairs.
- The steep section, joining the core loop to the gorge bridge, has no scope for re-routing this section to decrease the gradient; it will have to be used as it is and therefore limits access down to the gorge viewing.
- One of the “red” paths has been identified for potential to develop as a short all ability section. It breaks off from the core path just before the lochan (i.e. avoiding the slightly steeper section), and then loops back and re-joins the core path group where it would be re-traced back to the start.

#### Action

- Widen the red path alongside the lochan to enable wheel chair access and allow two people to walk side by side for support.
- Install drainage as required and a firm base with clear edges to the path; create a surface suitable to accommodate infirm and unconfident walkers, pushchairs and wheelchairs.
- Assess both the core path and the short “red” loop for additional needs to enhance all-ability use e.g. resting points/seats, hand rails, and install as necessary.

#### Planning

Not normally required – if it follows an existing path route and involves marginal widening.

## **2.3 Access points and signage external to the wood**

Aim: to ensure that the main entry points to the path network are clear and visible, both to those looking for the path and to passers-by.

#### Considerations

- Direction signs into the wood are planned to be erected under the core paths project at the three main entrances (Camden St, Chapel St and Assynt Mill), The Assynt Mill entrance will remain in the ownership of Novar Estate.

- The Evanton Community Trust has notice board and information provision in the village centre as part of the village renewal project phase 1. This can be used to promote paths.

#### Action

- Work with Access Officer to ensure external signposts are erected ASAP.
- Continuing liaison with the Evanton Community Trust regarding updating information on village centre board.

#### Planning

Any permission required will be sought by Access Officer.

## 2.4 Orientation and routes inside the wood

Aim: to ensure that, once in the wood, users are clearly informed about the choice and ability levels of routes, and that once on the path they are able to find their way.

#### Considerations

- Yellow way markers are planned within the woodland to show the route of the 2 core paths: Black Rock Gorge (part of which is on Novar Estate Land) and Evanton Wood circular. However, if the Community Company wishes to have coloured coded way markers, showing a greater variety of routes, this could be done instead with the group taking the lead.
- Many small side paths exist which are confusing to the new user. The Health Walk Group leaders recommend 4 possible graded routes to be colour coded. These will be finalised after path upgrade works.

#### Action

- Install an orientation board with map, route choices at the main Camden Street entrance. The wooden board will have double sided display which can be read from both sides, and an apex overhang as shelter.
- Design content for board display. One side could be permanent and the other a changeable notice board.

#### Planning

- Orientation board with overhang roof will require advertisement permission, but NOT full planning permission.
- Planning is NOT required for installation of waymarker posts along the route: considered deminimus, if small marker posts/arrows to indicate the walking routes.

## 2.5 Promotion

Aim: to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the open access, walks and woodland environment available for their enjoyment, especially all local residents.

#### Considerations

- Once all fully adopted, legislation requires production and public availability of maps of all core path maps by Highland Council. These are likely to be web based maps, so not accessible to everyone.
- All core paths in Scotland will also eventually be marked on all OS maps.

- Neither of above will include Evanton paths which are not core paths.

Action

- Enhancement of EWCC website with key links.
- Discuss options for new leaflet and posters with the access officer.

## **B4 Volunteer Policy**

### **Aims and Principles:**

EWCC wants to involve volunteers because they contribute an invaluable source of skill, expertise and effort in managing Evanton Woods. Without them the EWCC could not function effectively. All volunteers can contribute something to the EWCC and their input will be greatly valued.

The EWCC will ensure volunteers have

- Clear information about the EWCC and their role within it
- A safe working environment
- Clarity on how any paid staff/contractors will relate to volunteers
- Rewarding activities
- Support and encouragement from the EWCC
- Equal Opportunities and recognition of diversity

The EWCC will reduce the risk of involving volunteers who are unsuitable to work with vulnerable young people by operating a disclosure approach as required. A board member will be designated as the child protection contact.

The EWCC is committed to induction and training for volunteers and will ensure that volunteers are able to work safely and effectively. The EWCC will provide a main point of contact for volunteers.

The EWCC will commit to reimbursing bona fide volunteer expenses within agreed limits, if previously approved by the Board.

The EWCC will undertake its duty of care to volunteers with reference to Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and its overall Health and Safety Policy.

The EWCC will make it clear how and when volunteers would be covered by insurance and any circumstances when volunteers would be responsible for their own insurance. The procedures to be adopted when volunteers working in the wood are managed by another partner organisation will be made clear to those volunteers. The EWCC will make the volunteer aware of this information

The EWCC will establish a process for dealing with problems and complaints raised by, or about, volunteers that describes with whom, and in what circumstances, any concern should first be raised and the process for reaching agreement.

## B5 TRAINING POLICY

### Categories of training proposals

Training in support of woodland management (Action G)

Training to support community ownership

Training to support community engagement (Action C and D)

### Types of Training

Training and personal development covers all aspect of learning, both formal and informal, using resources ranging from college based instruction, organised events using specialist “instructors”, informal coaching and mentoring, information packs, on-the-job coaching, learning visits, attending conferences, reading books, papers, manuals etc.

Accreditation may be formal certification (chain saw, first aid, child protection, Forest Schools etc), awards (John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh, Scout/ Guide Achievements) or skills and knowledge transfer (governance and funding knowledge, guided walks, talks etc).

### Who will be trained?

Informal needs assessments have been carried out which have resulted in the training and development activities proposed in Actions C, D and H in the Plan. A more formal TNA will be carried out for Directors, volunteers and staff on an annual basis which will inform future organisational Training Plans. We will measure the value of training and skills exchanged in terms of the impact on training objectives (e.g. chainsaw qualifications) and this will be collated in an annual report for inspection.

We may carry out research to gauge interest within the community in a variety developmental activities to inform other future training and development activities. During year 1 and the development stage of the project a more accurate number of opportunities and numbers will be drawn up. The table below provides a guide only on the opportunities for individuals.

Training Area / Opportunity	Trainees / Participants	Examples	ADDITIONAL NOTES	Budget
<b>In support of woodland management</b>				
Skills Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EWCC Board Directors</li> <li>• Contractors</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Local community members</li> <li>• Teachers and facilitators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks, visits, conferences</li> </ul>	Included in other headings (IOH)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Path construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars</li> </ul>	IOH
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity identification</li> <li>• Biodiversity survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks, walks</li> <li>• Specialists</li> </ul>	IOH IOH

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bush craft</li> <li>Wood and wicker fence building</li> <li>Forest furniture build</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bushcraft budget</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ditch maintenance</li> <li>Ground clearing i.e. using 'clearing saws'</li> <li>Pruning and brashing</li> <li>Training in use and maintenance of hand tools</li> <li>Tree planting, both conifer and broad leaf</li> <li>Tree and plant identification</li> <li>Health &amp; Safety at work</li> <li>Risk assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer Action Days</li> </ul>	Vol Work Day supervision budget
		First Aid	7 for Basic 1 <sup>st</sup> Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1st Aid budget</li> </ul>
Formal Training Opportunities	EWCC Board Directors Volunteers Local community members Unemployed people School leavers Interested members of the public	Forest schools	Initial info (Training would be up to individuals)	
		Health and Safety First Aid	As above	As above
		Chainsaw and other power tools Felling and extraction	School of Forestry	Budget £650 * 3 pa
<b>In support of community ownership</b>				
Formal Training Opportunities	EWCC Board Directors Volunteers	Governance and stewardship Finance and	Seminars/training sessions via Voluntary	Generally FOC

ities and skills sharing		funding	Sector	
		Interpretive Design (through advisor)	Collaboration with specialist	n/a
		Event management and promotion	Collaboration with E&O Officer	n/a
<b>In support of community engagement</b>				
Formal Training Opportunities and skills sharing	EWCC Board Directors Volunteers	Working with volunteers	Seminars	Generally FOC
		Child protection	Seminars	FOC
		Basic forest management skills	Volunteer Days	Supervision budget
		Walk planning	In conjunction with Ranger etc	n/a
Lifelong Learning Personal Development	Volunteers School children Young people Unemployed job seekers Health walk leaders Conservation activity leaders Excluded groups Adults with learning difficulties	Community Events Arts, Culture, Music projects Creative writing Oral records Photography	In conjunction with E&O Officer	Some Other Training budget

## Training Plan

This is our initial training plan covering

### Year 1 - 2

Who	What	Measure
<b>Board members in support of community ownership and engagement</b>		
In first 3 months	Governance	All Director to undergo induction and briefing on roles and responsibilities
In first 3 months	Child protection	Director with responsibility for child protection to have 1/2 day training
In first 3 months	Health and safety	Director with HS responsibility to have 1/2 day training and complete H&S plan
In first year	Conferences	Two Directors to attend CWA annual conference
In first year	Visits	All Directors to visit 1 other community woodland site pa
In first 6 months	Volunteers	2 Directors to undergo training in

		recruitment and management of volunteers
<b>Volunteers in support of woodland management</b>		
Before any volunteer events	Small tool use	All volunteers to undergo briefing before event
Before any volunteer events	Woodland management	All volunteers to be briefed by Forestry Consultant/other suitably qualified person on suitable management actions
By end of year 2	Chain saw	6 volunteers identified to undertake training
By end of year 1	First Aid	2 volunteers to undertake first aid at work training – 1 day course
By end of year 1	Visitor Counters	2 volunteers to train in management of visitor counters

## **B6 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY**

Although trialling each of the events and activities has involved a risk assessment we have not yet developed a comprehensive health and safety policy. If we are successful in buying the wood, this would be a priority policy. In the meantime we have set out the following framework we would use derived from the SNH Manual – Management for People.

Good health and safety is about managing risk. Effective risk management practices play an important role in the management of outdoor recreation. Many forms of outdoor recreation have inherent risks associated with them, indeed for many of these activities risk and challenge are integral components. The key is to provide a reasonably safe environment dictated by present day priorities and the aspirations of the public. *It is worth noting that research shows that there is no strong evidence of an increase in the number of complaints about injury or damage arising from access to the countryside. In fact the number of serious injuries associated with leisure and recreation are small.*

However, legislation sets general rules for safety management across a whole range of activities. Legislation that has a bearing on visitor risk management includes:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Management of Health and safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- Occupiers liability (Scotland) Act 1960
- Children Act 1989

Good practice shows that it is essential to have a Visitor Risk Management Programme in place. These guidelines outline this process.

### **Visitor Risk Management Programme**

Why have Visitor Risk management programmes? The following factors have been identified

- Legal liability;
- Public perception;
- Ethical considerations;
- Professional satisfaction and staff motivation;
- Insurance premiums.

What are the components of a Visitor Risk Management Programme?

A Visitor Risk Management (VRM) programme involves a broad based understanding of the risks encountered by visitors and the provision of resources (funds and staff time) to minimise the frequency and consequences of visitor misadventure and injury.

<b>Principles of Visitor Safety</b>
<p>The Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group outline the following principles as a guide to what actions to take:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Take account of conservation, heritage, recreation, cultural and landscape objectives;</li><li>▪ Do not take away peoples sense of freedom and adventure;</li><li>▪ Avoid restrictions on access;</li></ul>

- Inform and educate your visitors about the nature and extent of hazards, the associated risks, the risk control measures in place and the precautions they themselves should take;
- Recognise that people taking part in different activities accept different levels of risk;
- Recognise that risk control measures for one group may create risks to others;
- Work with visitor groups to promote understanding and resolve conflict;
- Strike a balance between user self-reliance and management intervention;
- It is reasonable to expect visitors to exercise responsibility for themselves and not put others at risk;
- It is reasonable to expect parents guardians and leaders to supervise people in their care;
- Assess risks and develop Visitor Risk Management programmes for individual sites;
- Risk control measures should be consistent;
- Monitor the behaviour and experience of visitors to review Visitor management programmes;
- Make sure that your work activities do not expose visitors to risk.

An effective Visitor Risk Management programme will include the following: (This process has been adapted from the HSE document, managing Health and Safety, Five Steps to Success)

<b>Visitor Risk Management</b>				
Task		Description	Guidance note number	Best Practice example
<b>A SET POLICY</b>				
	Site policy Statement	Outlines the organisation and arrangements for the management of visitor health and Safety	A	
<b>B ORGANISE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS</b>				
	Staff training	All staff and volunteers involved in managing visitor risks need to be provided with structured training.	B	
<b>C ASSESS RISKS AND IDENTIFY CONTROL MEASURES</b>				
	Identify Hazards	1. Identify the hazards associated with an area or activity. 2. Decide who might be harmed and how.	C1	
	Evaluate the risks and determine what control measures to take	3. Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. Decide on the appropriate control measures 4. Record your findings	C2	
	Encourage visitor behaviour	To enable visitors to consider risks in planning their activities and to conduct themselves accordingly		
<b>D MEASURE PERFORMANCE</b>				
	Risk inspections	To detect and manage hazards before visitors are injured	D1	

	Accident reporting	In the case where control measures are not implemented or prove ineffective – all accidents and injuries need to be reported and investigated promptly	D2	
	Accident recording	To ensure that all reported accidents are logged and help on-going monitoring and review of the process	D3	
<b>E AUDIT AND REVIEW</b>				
	Audit and review	5. A regular review of the programme to ensure its effectiveness	E	

### a) Set Policy

Organisations should have a policy which will set out the organisation and arrangements for the management of Health and Safety within the organisation. This document should influence all the organisations activities, including the selection of people, equipment and materials, the way work is done and how it provides goods and services.

This is a short document that sets out the organisation and arrangements for managing risk at that particular site. It is particularly useful to ensure that staff, and volunteers are fully aware of their role in the process. The document can also list the Goals and Objectives of the site's Risk Management programme.

### b) Organise Staff and Volunteers

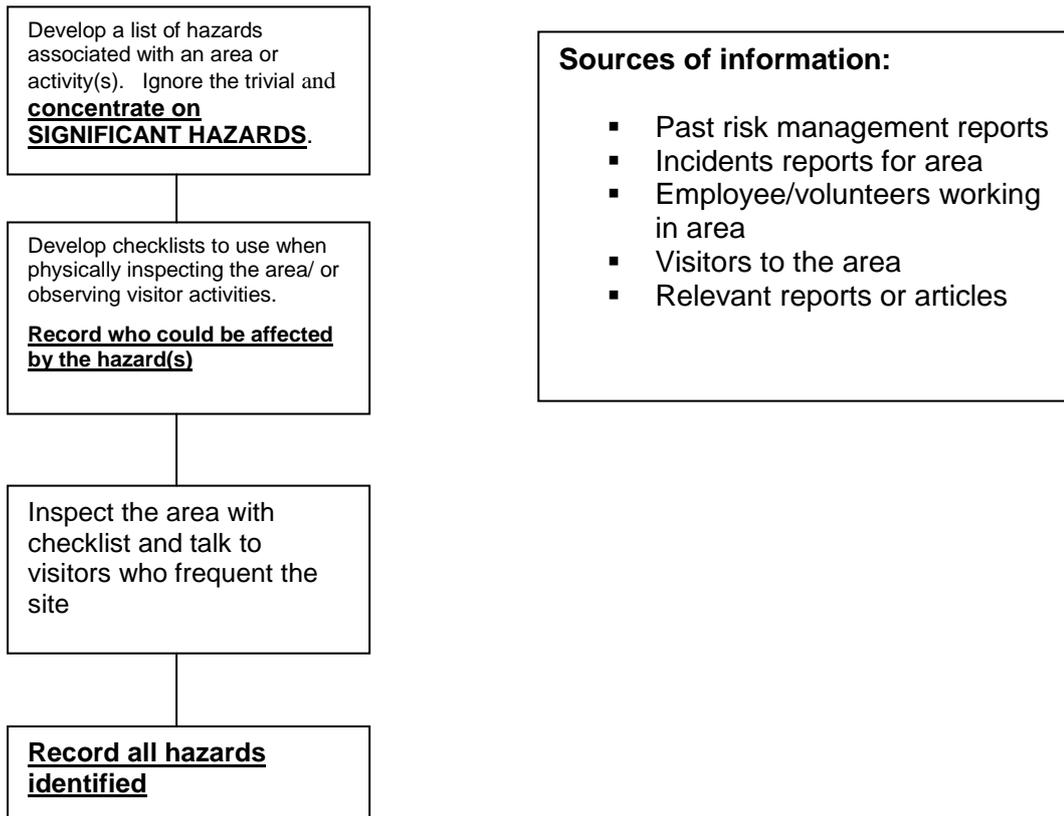
To make the Policy effective it is important to get Board, staff and volunteers involved and committed. It is equally important to have effective communication with staff and volunteers:

- Assess the skills needed to carry out the tasks safely;
- Staff and volunteers need to be adequately trained to have proficiency in the identification, assessment and treatment of risk;
- Allocate responsibilities for particular Health and Safety tasks;
- Ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and have the time and resources to carry them out;
- Involve staff and volunteers in planning and reviewing your Risk Management Programme;
- Following Risk assessment provide information about hazards, risks and control measures to staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the public;
- Arrange for access to sound advice on legal and insurance issues.

### c) Assess Risks and Identify Control Measures

#### Identify Hazards

There should be a structured process to identify hazards. This includes a detailed examination of available information on past incidents and areas on the site where incidents may occur.



Evaluate the risks and decide on what control measures to take

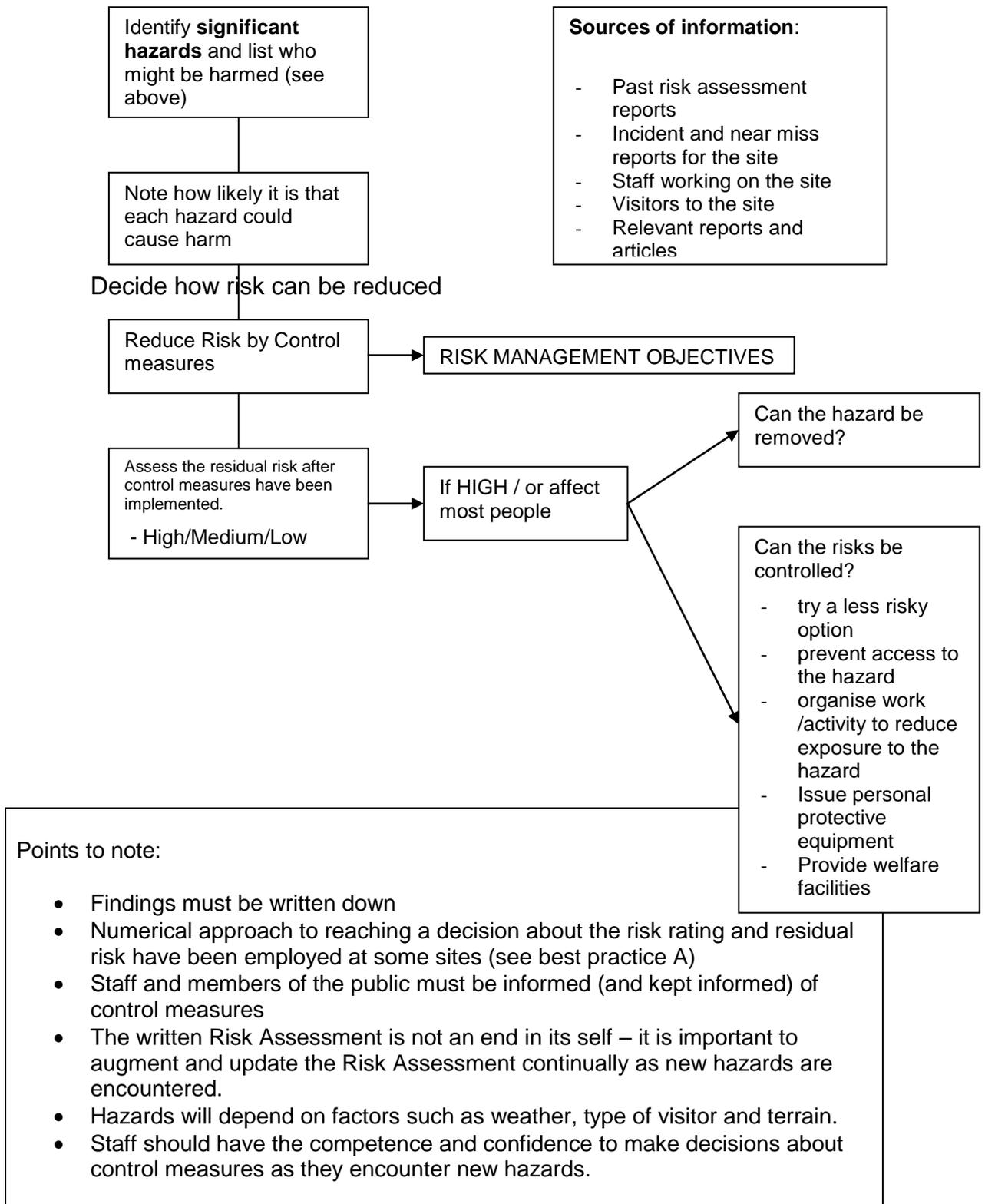
This is an assessment of how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm.

There are a number of methods for assessing risks ranging from the simple to the very complicated. It is important to adopt a programme that can be maintained. The HSE's 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment'<sup>1</sup> is a good starting point.

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<sup>1</sup> HSE, Five Steps to Risk assessment, HSE books, [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)

The process outlined in the HSE Guide is as follows:



#### **d) Measure Performance**

The process above will have resulted in a set of objectives that will manage the risks to staff and visitors. It is important that the process has a mechanism for checking that the objectives set are being met and are effective.

There are two key components of monitoring systems:

- Active monitoring – Risk Inspections: - before things go wrong.
- Reactive monitoring – Accident Reporting – after things go wrong.

##### Risk Inspections

Regular risk inspections should be carried out to detect and manage hazards before visitors are injured, thereby minimising the frequency of incidents. The frequency of inspections will vary according to the type of risk and the nature of the attraction/facility. This monitoring will ensure that the control measure(s) identified and implemented have adequately addressed the risk(s) identified.

##### Accident Reporting

All visitor accidents and injuries need to be investigated promptly. The approach should be to report the facts in an objective and unbiased manner and in sufficient detail to allow analysis and appraisal. A standard procedure and format should be adopted to ensure consistency.

Accident investigation should include the following elements:

- Obtain the most accurate and relevant information. Witness statements need to be taken.
- The report should state fact rather than opinion.
- Photographs should be taken of the scene.

##### Risk Management Recording

It is important to keep a written record of the process followed. The Risk Management Programme could include the following sections:

- Policy – the organisation and arrangements for managing Health and Safety on the site.
- Risk assessments and the control measures/objectives that have been set.
- Risk inspections and any changes that they generate. This should include maintenance schedules
- Accident recording – to facilitate on-going monitoring and review of the Programme and reduce liability.

#### **e) Audit and Review**

The monitoring outlined above provides the information to enable you to review operational activities and improve performance.

## **B7 INTERPRETATION PLAN**

Interpretation is about showing people what is special about a site. It is more than information giving, which tends to be a passive process, or orientation, which is focused on placing people in a location. Interpretation provides a deeper emotional or learning experience.

1) There is no current on-site interpretation at Evanton Wood. Neither is there any off-site interpretation such as a current leaflet or up-to-date website materials.

Interpretation is needed to improve awareness of the special nature of Evanton Woods, leading to people caring more deeply and volunteering their support or services, and to enable an enriched learning experience for those interested in the natural and cultural history of the site. EWCC have the following vision they wish to pursue.

***‘Evanton Wood Community Company aims to purchase and actively manage the woodland for the benefit of the community, in a manner that maintains and enhances the rich and diverse environment and develops its educational, recreational and timber resource. This will bring a priceless asset under the control and ownership of the community in perpetuity, providing a sustainable fuel source, learning and employment opportunities, and a bio-diverse amenity for all to enjoy.’***

### **Audience**

The audience for the interpretation is the community of Evanton and the general public, potentially including walkers, horse-riders, cyclists, family groups, orienteers, those with an interest in woodlands, wildlife, landscape, history, or those just out for a picnic. Interpretation should be as inclusive of these different groups, and of different age ranges and learning abilities as possible. The interpretation will be aimed at existing levels of visitors, rather than designed to act as a promotional tool – it will take local need into account, and local people will be given the opportunity to comment on plans and designs.

### **Interpretive resources**

Evanton Wood offers a huge range of interpretive and educational resources in a small area. There is a wealth of information that the public could be made aware of, and equally a lot of learning potential for schools, which will be covered in a separate Education Pack.

The main resources that Evanton Wood has to offer are:

1. How the woodland habitats of Evanton Wood have developed through forestry management (continuous cover) and natural processes.
2. The different habitats and the range of species present in Evanton Wood.
3. The geology of the Black Rock Gorge.
4. International Forest Heritage - Professor Sir William Schlich
5. Cultural heritage, Gaelic place names, past stories and more contemporary activities

## 6. Views out from the wood to the Cromarty Firth and the hills to the north.

Clearly these resources are interrelated and could give rise to many more specific topics. There is considerable potential for story development on many different levels, from how the ice age deposited the large moraines behind the village (Cnoc Ruadh) and the melt water from Glaciers on Ben Wyvis that tore through the gorge creating this damp sheltered woodland, to more profound levels of reflection on how people and Evanton Wood have developed together through time. The next section helps to clarify the direction of on-site interpretation by setting a main theme and more detailed objectives.

### Themes

There are many ways in which these main topics could be conveyed to the audience, the best route to finding the 'right' way is to develop a main theme for the work; so that there is a consistent message, and sub themes with supporting stories, giving the visitor a structured story that they are likely to remember when they leave the site.

The proposed central interpretive theme is:

**'Evanton Wood is a very special place that people have always enjoyed because of its heritage and closeness to nature. Let's keep it that way.'**

This gives scope for including elements of all the main topics, with an additional element of appealing to the visitor to actively protect the site through appropriate behaviour.

### Main objectives

Interpretation should be designed to have an effect on the visitor. Interpretive planners tend to split this effect into three categories: Learning, Emotional and Behavioural outcomes; or Thinking, Feeling, Doing outcomes - these are interrelated as learning something new could make people feel a certain way, and then act upon the feeling. Similarly to the main theme, this list of main site objectives will act as a spine from which other more detailed objectives are developed for key places within the wood, or key media to be used off-site.

### Learning Objectives

Ideally, the visitor should learn:

- That Evanton Wood is owned by the local community;
- The tree covered glacial mounds of gravel and sand are what make Evanton Wood the backdrop to the village;
- That Professor Sir William Schlich, a hugely influential person in how the world's forests are managed, designed the original layout of Evanton Woods, and through him this little wood in Evanton is connected to global forestry;
- About significant elements of the forestry heritage of the woods, how the trees are managed;
- About significant wildlife;
- About the cultural history and origins of Gaelic place names;

- That there is a very protective local community caring for the site;
- That visitor behaviour can affect the nature of the site and potential for enjoyment by others.

### **Emotional Objectives**

Ideally the visitor should feel:

- Surprise at the wealth of interest that Evanton Wood has to offer and that it is an important site in Scottish and international forestry heritage;
- Secure that the woods are a safe and managed place to walk, ride, picnic and enjoy the views;
- Keen-ness to explore the site and to learn more about the wildlife and history and how the site is managed;
- Fascination for the differences between Evanton Wood and other commercially managed plantations;
- Understanding of the need to balance wildlife with amenity;
- Empathy with the lifestyles of the people who have lived and worked in and around the wood;
- Protectiveness of the site and its features;
- Respect for other users;
- Keen-ness to spread understanding of the special nature of the site, and to visit again;
- Security / empowerment – knowing who to contact in an emergency and or for more information;

### **Behavioural objectives**

Ideally the visitor should:

- Comply with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Park appropriately and respectfully of other visitors;
- Approach interpretative material finding it easy to use and appealing;
- Follow the self-guided trails;
- Be respectful of other users;
- Give positive feedback to others about their visit to Evanton Wood;
- Discover more about the nature of Evanton Wood using the website;
- Visit again, and offer volunteer support to help protect the site;
- Attend activities and events within the wood.

### **Interpretive Media**

1. A comprehensive website for Evanton Wood
2. A simple interpretive leaflet
3. An Access Map

Evanton Wood Access Maps placing key entry points (Camden Street, Chapel, Black Rock Gorge and in the Caravan Park) would enable the visitor to orientate themselves and to find the interest points in the wood.

Main features of suggested design:

- Offering a welcome
- Rustic style
- Native hardwood
- Local place-name with brief background information
- Pictorial access map with path network and main places of interest
- Approximate size: 400mm x 400mm, around 80mm height

#### 4. Interpretive Panels

Two interpretive panels are proposed for the crossroads site. Mounted vertically in a roofed structure they would follow the interpretive plan and focus on the central theme.

**‘Evanton Wood is a very special place that people have always enjoyed because of its heritage and closeness to nature. Let’s keep it that way.’**

Content would be based around:

- Cultural links – Gaelic place names;
- Human management of the woodland heritage – from Professor Sir William Schlick to today’s volunteers;
- Woodland biodiversity including geology and land forms;

The roofed structure will carry an interpretive leaflet dispenser and have the space for information on woodland activities, warning or advisory notices etc.

## 7 Plan/policy reviews and monitoring

The following plans/policies will be developed on an on-going basis and will be monitored and reviewed by the EWCC Board annually with a major review every five years. Audits complement monitoring activities, by looking to see if the plan or policy and systems are achieving the right results, objectives are being met and there is compliance with statutory requirements. This will help achieve continuous improvement.

- Access
- Volunteer
- Training
- Health and safety
- Interpretation

## **APPENDIX C: MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Management Structure**

Evanton Wood Community Company (EWCC) was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee without share capital in October 2007, with the objective of acquiring and managing Evanton Wood on behalf of, and for the benefit of the local community. The company has charitable status.

### **Evanton Wood Community Company Memorandum of Association**

The company has been formed to benefit the community of Evanton, Ross-shire, as defined by all the post code units in postcode district IV16 (“the Community”) with the following Purposes (“the Purposes”):

To manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the community and the public in general following the principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

To provide, or assist in providing recreational facilities, and organising recreational activities which will be available to members of the public at large, with the object of improving the conditions of the life of the Community, and following principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To advance Community development, including urban or rural regeneration, following principles of sustainable development where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To advance the education of the Community about its environment, heritage, culture and history.

To advance environmental protection or improvement, including preservation, and conservation of the natural environment, the promotion of sustainable development, the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the Community and preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the Community

### **Representatives and accountability:**

The board comprises six elected directors and up to 3 co-opted members.

Adrian Clark (Chair), Christine Hamilton (Vice-Chair), Janey Clarke (Secretary), Keith Kennedy (Treasurer) (standing down Oct/Nov 11), Douglas Wilson, Penny Gray (moved from co-opted to elected Oct 11), Kennie McCusker (elected Oct 11); Diane Baude de Bunnetat (co-opted director). Leslie Logan attends as a representative of Kiltearn Community Council.

The EWCC membership (£5 annual) is open to all local residents and currently stands at over 70. One of the directors has responsibility as membership secretary and the organisation is being promoted throughout the community in order to

maximise membership. Consideration is being given to longer term membership. There is provision for associate membership (£3 annual) for those who live outwith the community; there is a youth membership option (£1).

EWCC in September 2010 changed certain clauses in its Memorandum and Articles of Association to allow it to apply for charitable status. This has now been done and EWCC is a registered charity SCO 042025.

Board management skills are set out below. In anticipation of ownership Directors have embarked on training and awareness activities both with specialists visiting Evanton Woods and Directors visiting established neighbouring community woods at Farr near Inverness and Findhorn in Moray to seek lessons to learn. In both locations Board members learnt that key decisions were taken by relatively few people but that larger numbers were happy to be involved in practical activities and events of a very wide-ranging and creative nature.

The EWCC will seek specialist advice from a variety of sources. Key amongst these is the Community Woodlands Association (CWA). Established in 2003 as the direct representative body of Scotland's community woodland groups the CWA helps community woodland groups across the country achieve their aspirations and potential, providing advice, assistance and information, facilitating networking and training, and representing and promoting community woodlands to the wider world. There are now well over 200 Community Woodland Groups across Scotland, involved in or responsible for the management of thousands of hectares of woodland and open space.

Directors are attending the following events in the near future:

- Community Woodland Association AGM and Conference on 12/13 Nov (NB 2 attended)
- Forest Education Initiative Scotland Networking and Development Event - Successful Partnership Working - 1st December

### **EWCC Management skills and knowledge**

<b>DIRECTOR</b>	<b>BACKGROUND SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE</b>
Adrian Clark Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 Years as Development worker/coordinator and journalist</li> <li>• 4 Years as Community Enterprise Manager, Highlands</li> <li>• 15 Years Arts and Cultural officer posts Highland Council</li> <li>• Historical researcher and cultural studies student</li> <li>• Varied voluntary organisation committee experience</li> </ul>
Christine Hamilton Vice Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner and manager of small woodland in Orkney</li> <li>• Member of Borders Forest Trust and Orkney Field Club</li> <li>• Member of John Muir Trust with keen interest in environmental issues</li> <li>• Practised for many years as a dentist</li> </ul>
Janey Clarke Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Publishing</li> <li>• Local history</li> <li>• Woodland owner</li> </ul>
Keith Kennedy (standing down)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly 30 years in Oil Industry: Manager with Brown &amp; Root, Nigg; director of Service co, Invergordon</li> <li>• Fundraising Manager MacMillan Cancer Fund for short period in 90s</li> <li>• Currently self-employed builder</li> </ul>

Douglas Wilson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lived in Glenglass for 19 years in a house bordering the woods.</li> <li>• VW Campervan hire business based in Glenglass</li> <li>• Evanton Wood is a playground for my children and my first choice for walking and running</li> </ul>
Diane Baude de Bunnetat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crofter in E Ross for 12 years</li> <li>• Retired. Lives in village</li> </ul>
Penny Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background in staff, management and business development</li> <li>• Regular walker in Evanton Woods for the last 14 years</li> <li>• Over 15 years' experience as a youth group leader</li> <li>• Director of engineering business specialising in small scale hydro schemes</li> <li>• Member of John Muir Trust</li> </ul>
Kennie McCusker (new Oct 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry Trained</li> <li>• Self-employed Stumps Garden Forestry Service</li> </ul>
Leslie Logan (in attendance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiltearn Community Council Representative</li> <li>• Self-employed accountant</li> </ul>

## Woodland Advisor

### Cameron Ross – Cross Cut Forestry

Worked as a Forestry Commission Forest Worker in Aberfoyle Forest District before attending the Scottish School of Forestry at Culloden where he completed the National Diploma in Forestry in 1988. Assistant Forester on Novar Estate (1988), Head Forester in 1992 – 2007: responsible for all aspects of the management of 3500 hectares of woodland as well as being involved in many other estate activities. In 2007 he formed Crosscut Forestry, an independent Forestry Consultancy business, now involved in the management of a number of woodland properties across the North of Scotland ranging from small areas of Native Woodland managed principally for conservation to large areas of productive woodland.

Affiliate member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, a member of the Society of Consultant Foresters of Scotland, the Royal Scottish Forestry Society and the Confederation of Forest Industries (UK).

## **APPENDIX D: JOB CONTRACT DESCRIPTION**

### **Education and Outreach Coordinator**

#### **Contractual Terms**

##### **General:**

The successful candidate will be tasked with delivering the community education, training, development and access aspects of EWCC Heritage Lottery Fund Activity Plan (Action Points), in liaison with the board of directors. (This excludes technical aspects of woodland management.)

##### **Specifically:**

- To involve local schools (esp. Kiltearn Primary School, Alness Academy and St Clements) in educational activities in and relating to Evanton Wood (incl. biodiversity aspects).
- To take a lead in the development of an Education Pack relating to the wood (incl. biodiversity)
- To organise a range of out-of-school youth opportunities in the wood, through working with a range of groups (eg. Scouts and Guides, DoE, John Muir Trust, Evanton Youth Enterprise)
- To organise a programme of Guided walks and joint activities in conjunction with the Countryside Ranger and other services.
- To encourage wider use of the wood for a range of activities including by special needs groups
- To arrange a regular programme of practical volunteer activities (woodland management, native tree planting, paths maintenance, ditch clearance etc) – in association with appropriate groups
- To arrange a programme of biological recording and surveying; linking with environmental groups and specialists (eg Highland Biological Recording Group, Red Squirrel Society etc); involving the community in the same
- To arrange volunteer training relating to the above
- To organise related training/work experience/participation eg chainsaw training
- To work with volunteers in the programming and running of a range of family and community events in the wood
- To develop the capacity within the community to continue an appropriate programme of activities and events.

The coordinator will also work with the Board of Directors to undertake the following:

- Volunteer co-ordination and training
- Marketing of woodland facilities and events
- Development of interpretation boards, signage and literature

The coordinator will develop the education and outreach programme in conjunction with the Board and in relation to the proposed outputs of the Heritage Lottery programme. S/he will be allocated activity budgets as per the HLF Activity Plan. S/he will report to the Chair of the Board or nominee on a quarterly basis with feed-back from activity participants. Attendance at Board meetings will often be expected.

There will be a quarterly review meeting with the Chairman of the Board or nominee to assess progress in meeting agreed targets. The candidate will also be required to do project administration and monitoring

**Conditions**

The offer of contract will be subject to a clear record through Disclosure Scotland with regard to suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. This is a self-employed contract. Hours of Work are flexible; a programme of work will be agreed in consultation with the Board. The fee is based on an hourly rate of £12.50 per hour (rising to £13.00 in Year 3) on an average of 20 hours a week for 44 weeks of the year; this is a guideline only and hours are likely to vary from week to week, month to month, within a total of 880 hours p.a. Payment will be made monthly on receipt of invoice detailing work undertaken and hours spent. The normal place of work will be considered to be Evanton Wood; the coordinator will be expected to have their own office facilities. S/he will be able to claim stationery and related expenses (not computer hardware) and travel expenses from Evanton within to the annual budget.

The coordinator will be expected to be a fully competent administrator, using normal office computer programmes which he/she will bring to the job as tools of the trade.

There will be a 3-month probationary period following satisfactory completion of which the contractee will be offered a contract to the end of the HLF funded project (currently proposed April 2017), subject to continued funding.

## **APPENDIX E: ORGANISATIONS, GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Partnerships in Development**

Community	<p>Evanton community including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evanton Walking Group (SIUH) <i>[see letter]</i></li> <li>• Scouts</li> <li>• Guides and Brownies <i>[see letter]</i></li> </ul>
Visitors	<p>Black Rock Gorge Caravan Park Visitors Dingwall and Alness Walking Groups (SIUH)</p>
Schools	<p>Kiltearn Primary School <i>[see letter]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked closely on an Art in the Woodland project</li> <li>• Keen to involve pupils in the wood</li> <li>• Toilet facilities would help</li> </ul> <p>Alness Academy (75 pupils from Evanton area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial contact made</li> </ul> <p>St Clements Special School, Dingwall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial contact made</li> </ul>
Agencies	<p>Highland Council Ranger Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have run 2 joint trial events (bats and moths)</li> <li>• Ranger is keen to make additional use of the wood for events and to assist EWCC</li> <li>• Advantages of joint approach: publicity via EWCC members, also through Ranger network; mixture of outside expertise and local interest; opens up other opportunities</li> <li>• Plan two joint events pa</li> </ul> <p>SNH: potential funder <i>[see letter]</i>;</p> <p><a href="http://www.foresteducation.org">www.foresteducation.org</a></p>
Colleges	<p>Scottish School of Forestry - Inverness College UHI (interest)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available for training short courses in situ</li> </ul>
NGOs	<p>Community Woodland Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are members; attended annual conference 2011</li> </ul> <p>BTCV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Took part in a few days' work in the wood summer 2011. This was not a formal partnership.</li> <li>• Normally their Green Gym is committed to work in Dingwall and Seaforth (programme is established in conjunction with Highland Council Ward Managers)</li> <li>• Can help to set up Community Green Gyms. Cost £2000 includes training, support days, management info systems incl. risk assessments.</li> <li>• Can purchase additional days @ £250 day + VAT (plus 74p mile for van). Prefer 12 weeks' notice but can normally fit into programme within one month.</li> </ul> <p>Scottish Wildlife Trust</p>
Other Woodlands	<p>Milton Community Woodland (visited Nov 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would be glad to collaborate on training and events</li> </ul> <p>Abriachan Community Woodland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoke to open meeting; happy to advise</li> </ul>
Trainers & materials	<p>Forest Education Initiative Attending conference Dec '11;</p>

	<p>www.foresteducation.org Forest School Training Co.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest School training throughout England, Scotland and Wales and work with organisations such as The Forestry Commission, Forest Education Initiative, Local Education Authorities and Wildlife Trusts</li> <li>• Cost of courses c £850 plus VAT; accredited by Open College Network (no SQA validation as yet); starting new modular training</li> <li>• Abriachan Community Woodland available for Forest Schools Training</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.foresteducation.org/woodland_learning/forest_schools/">http://www.foresteducation.org/woodland_learning/forest_schools/</a></li> </ul>
Recording and specialist groups	<p>Highland Biological Recording Group [see letter] Inverness Bat Group The Woodland Trust [see letter] Highland Red Squirrel Group [see letter] British Trust for Ornithology [see letter] Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A joint story-telling event was held in the wood during the Archaeology Festival 2010; this proved highly popular and could easily be repeated.</li> <li>• EWCC could work with ARCH and potentially NOSAS (North of Scotland Archaeological Society) in doing some surveying of known and potential archaeological features in and on the perimeter of the wood.</li> </ul>
Outdoor companies	<p>G2 Outdoor – Aviemore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have surveyed gorge for potential use by groups</li> </ul>
Arts in Motion	<p>Arts in Motion [see letter]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for involvement in Halloween and Christmas events using special projections.</li> </ul>

### Supporting statements from groups and organisations using Evanton Wood.

1) Linda Cook, Head Teacher and the Staff and Pupils of Kiltearn Primary School, Evanton support the Evanton Wood Community Company's bid to purchase Evanton Woods.

*“Over the years we have used the woods as an outdoor classroom on numerous occasions and staff and pupils have benefited greatly from this. Local volunteers from the village have come to school to talk to us about the flora and fauna of the woods and have led class visits to the woods helping to motivate and enthuse the children about the wildlife in and around the woods.*

*Curriculum for Excellence encourages learning to take place in a variety of settings. The outdoor environment has a massive potential for learning and because Evanton Woods are so accessible we would like to continue using them to deliver motivating, exciting and relevant learning experiences for our children.*

*Furthermore we are working towards our Green Flag Eco-schools Award which is an international initiative designed to encourage whole school action for the environment and we feel we would greatly benefit from accessing the woods to help deliver our Eco-school curriculum.*

*The proposed improvements to pathways and added signage would greatly benefit us and make the woods accessible to all our pupils including those with mobility difficulties.”*

2) Moira Mckenna Leader 1st Evanton Guide Unit support the Evanton Wood Community Company’s bid to purchase Evanton Woods.

*“As a unit we feel the woods are an invaluable resource for us. We currently have permission from the estate to use the woods and have undertaken a variety of activities, such as wildlife spotting, shelter building, map reading, trail building and tracking activities. As the woods are within yards of the Diamond Jubilee Hall, our meeting place, they are ideally suited and easy to access as well as being safe to access, with no major road crossings, which is important as sometimes small groups of girls go on their own, to lay trails for instance.*

*We have held promise ceremonies in the woods when the guides are enrolled, in one occasion in the dark with the guides making their own storm lanterns the week before. A lot of the guides had not experienced darkness away from street lighting before. We did a project on homelessness and on one evening went into the woods and built ourselves temporary shelters.*

*Last year for the Lily Wallace challenge (an annual event where the Ross-shire guide units are challenged to make something), we had to make a piece of camp equipment from wood and string and the woods provided us with the raw materials.*

*These are just a few examples of the use that we put the woods to. They are a fantastic natural resource right on our doorstep, safe to access and with a huge variety of uses for groups such as ours.”*

3) Trevor Black, Chair of Evanton Youth Enterprise support the Evanton Wood Community Company’s bid to purchase Evanton Woods.

*“Evanton Youth Enterprise exists to improve facilities and encourage opportunities for young people, especially teenagers, in and around Evanton. To date our work has mainly concentrated on building facilities for bikes and skateboarders in Teandallon Park.*

*We have been supportive of the community bid to purchase Evanton Wood from the start and recognise that community ownership will open up further opportunities for the youth population of the area. We are indeed keen to collaborate on joint ventures in the wood.*

*We would envisage joint working on activities such as:*

- *Building temporary shelters using on-site materials*
- *Building a more permanent timber shelter (young people could be engaged on a work experience basis under suitable supervision)*
- *Fund-raising for youth activities and events*
- *Setting up and running such activities and events eg practical skills (green wood skills such as wood turning); music events with a youth music focus; other creative activities; mountain-bike/other bike events.*

*We would expect to be able to access some additional supervision through the Youth Service as we have in the past – particularly as Evanton has relatively been under-served in this regard. We wish you all the best in your bid and to working together closely once the community has control of the wood.”*

4) Mark Foxwell Reserves Manager Scottish Wildlife Trust support the Evanton Wood Community Company's bid to purchase Evanton Woods.

*"I very much enjoyed my visit to Evanton Wood with you last year. It is always a pleasure to walk about one of the rare fragments of semi native woodland that remain in this area.*

*It seems to me that a wood of this quality is crying out for the care and attention that only community ownership can bring, and I was impressed by the enthusiasm from the community to get on and make this happen.*

*I am sure that you can make major improvements to the quality and value of Evanton Wood by introducing sensitive management, involving local people in woodland management with all the multiple benefits that this brings, and perhaps developing some small enterprises that might bring in a revenue stream to secure woodland management in the long term.*

*The wood contains a number of BAP habitats and species for those who need to be convinced of the quality of the wood. However, I think the best way to evaluate it is to take a wander through it, and meet some of those involved in this community purchase. One can only conclude that it is a quality site with quality plans for community management."*

4) Bob Dunsmore, ex conservator Forestry Commission, writes (Oct. 2010):

*"I have always seen Evanton Wood as one of the most important woodlands of the north. In fact it is unusual in Scotland for various reasons. There are a number of woods Scotland wide that have a high percentage of large diameter trees but few of these are the result of planned silvicultural management. The wood is now an exceptional example of continuous cover forestry, transformed after WW II which makes it particularly important technically (and well recognised for it). However the wide variety of tree size and the high percentage of 'cathedral' trees also make it one of the most attractive woods in the Highlands. I often organised visits both domestic and international and Evanton was frequently a wood that people wished to visit.*

*The wood had a significant input from Prof Schlich, an iconic figure in forestry, and this makes it an important feature of the history of woodland management in UK.....*

*It is now one of a dwindling number of woods which can supply large diameter timber for the type of post and beam timber construction favoured by innovative architects. The wood is heavily used by the public and has been for many years. It provides high quality recreation and there are opportunities for environmental education.....*

*I was lucky enough to be able to tour the wood last year and it is in good heart although some catching up will be necessary.... A move to community management could well provide the intensity of management which can be difficult to achieve through conventional estate management. In my view it is very important for the Highlands and our forest heritage that the unique qualities of this woodland are preserved and developed into the future.'*

5) Lynne Baxter, Coordinator, Step It Up Highland

*'As co-ordinator of Step It Up Highland I recognise the benefit our local Evanton walking group in particular, enjoys through regular access to and use of Evanton Woods. As regular users of the woodland, they have reported back on the positive effects the local volunteer clearing of invasive Western Hemlock has had, providing improved access and maintaining clear access along paths – not to mention the improvement in views! Other SIUH groups do also on occasion also use these paths*

*through the woods, so this type of upkeep, interest in the local wood environment and maintenance is to be encouraged.*

*SIUH is keen to enable all members of the communities we cover, to enjoy local walks that are safe, accessible and welcoming, ideally with signage where appropriate. Evanton Woods stands as one such local precious resource and we support your application to the Heritage Fund to enable continued safe and enjoyable usage for the local community.'*

6) Jonathen Willet, Highland Biological Recording Group (Chairman)

*'The HBRG would be delighted to enter a working partnership with the Evanton Wood Community Company to encourage biological recording within the wood and also the surrounding area. We would be able to run at least one HBRG members field visit to the wood to see what we could find and could also make our members aware of the work in the wood and I am sure a few would be keen to do some voluntary surveying there. Our membership could also provide some of the experts you are require for the contracted surveys that you have planned.'*

7) Mandy Cook, Development Officer for British Trust for Ornithology, Scotland

*'We would be happy for BTO to be mentioned as a partner in the Evanton Community Woodland Group HLF application. Staff from BTO Scotland would not have the time to get directly involved in their project, but if you're happy to continue to get help out with bird surveys, etc. then that would be absolutely fine'.*

8) Tim Dawson, Area Officer, Inner Moray Firth Team, South Highland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)

*'... you could, if it's helpful to you, submit an application before the buyout has gone through and we can add a condition to the grant to say that it will only be paid if you're successful with the purchase. This might help you with HLF wanting demonstration of SNH support for your work? Another thing to bear in mind - don't apply prematurely, as community action grants are only valid for a year from the date of offer. There could be slippage with your buyout (let's hope not!), and this might therefore become a problem for you if you apply too soon. Remember that we are open for community action grant applications throughout the year'.*

## **Appendix F: Woodland Management Plan**

See attached Woodland Management Plan

## **Appendix G: Some Cultural features and connections in Evanton Wood**

- Coulags (cf. na Cùileagan, Torridon).
- 'Dead Man's Grave'. Alternatively the 'Trampie's Grave'. Near the river, near the dump.
- Balconie Well Provided water by pipe to Balconie Castle.



<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1702075> © Copyright [Sylvia duckworth](#) and licensed for [reuse](#) under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).)

- Loch an-t' Saighdear. Apparently so called because a soldier drowned in it (Frank MacIannan).
- Allt Cul na Greine (literally stream at the back of the sun? behind the sunny place). A.k.a the Blayrach Burn. NB biolaireach – rich in water-cresses (MacIannan).

Edible Water cress or Brooklime (*Veronica Beccabunga*) grows there today AC. Sonny Dick Munro in a poem writes 'The peace I knew when just a boy like them will ne'er return - But memories linger with me as I pass the Blaroch burn - On a Sunday afternoon by my parents' side - We would wander through the Culags, wild daisies spreading wide' (EOH).

- Poll Lucais - Poll Ookitch/'Plookage'/ Poll Lucais/ Pool Intlugich (Bishop Forbes 1762) = the pool that swallows. cf Poll an t-slugaid, pool of the gulp or swallow on R.Carron - the pool in question was one of the largest on the river (Watson, PNRC, p.2)
- Mag 'the Wood'. M. Alec Munro, son Peter. House inside the wood (behind Rosie's). It was a 'decent house' 'there was a well beside it' (George Munro 2011).

- Clach a Cholumain NH 5945 6681 the name translates as 'The Pigeon (or Dove) Stone' and some people believe the name may be pre-Christian. There are 2 large stones near the gorge.

Janette MacLennan remembers as a girl sitting on the rock, with the key imprint. They told each other the story that if a certain number sat on the stone it would roll into the gorge (Evanton Oral History Project).



Mark Stevens by the likely Clach a Cholumain

- **Lady of Balconie and the Blackrock Gorge**

- a) Full story told by Hugh Miller in *Scenes and Legends*.  
[http://gerald-massey.org.uk/miller/c\\_scenes\\_04.htm](http://gerald-massey.org.uk/miller/c_scenes_04.htm)

- b) Frank MacLennan adds: 'The Lady of Balconie appears to have been the daughter of an old Lord of Balconie. Her nurse was a witch and secretly trained the girl in the black art. This became known after the pupil had developed considerable skill. There were visitors; they and the family were strolling on the lawn on the eastern end of the castle. The subject of witchcraft cropped up, and someone made a scoffing or sceptic remark.

The young lady bridled: - "See what I can do!" On the instant the castle rose several feet into the air, so that the startled people were able to see, between it and the foundations, the fields out beyond, the blue reach of the Cromarty Firth and the slopes of the Black Isle. For a few seconds the building hung thus; then it was lowered to its original base – not a stone being displaced.' (*Ferindonald Papers*, 10).

- c) 'It used to be said, even into this century (20<sup>th</sup>), when mist rose from the water and lay along the course of the Black Rock, that it was from the Lady of Balconie's fire, and a sign that she was baking – baking the bannocks for her master the Devil.' (p.11)

- d) FM writes if Dr. Robert Munro (1835-1920) remembered as a boy 'going warily up the banks of the Black Rock, aware that it was a haunt of Satan, and sometimes wondering what strange power in past ages had been able to rend the solid stone.' (p.75). In his autobiography he mentions that the gorge is 'so narrow in places it may be crossed on the branches of overhanging trees – a feat which I have frequently performed.' (FP p.79)

- e) The gorge is also the setting for the popular legend of The Lady of Balconie retold by Hugh Miller in 'Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland'.

- f) Hugh Miller also writes in *The Cruise of the Betsy* a less well-known story:

*'The boulder beside the Auldgrande has not only, like the Clach Malloch, a geologic history of its own, but, what some may deem of perhaps equal authority, mythological history also. The inaccessible chasm, impervious to the sun, and ever resounding the wild howl of the tortured water, was too remarkable an object to have escaped the notice of the old imaginative Celts; and they have married it, as was their wont, to a set of stories quite as wild as itself. And the boulder, occupying a nearly central position in its course, just where the dell is deepest, and narrowest,*

and blackest, and where the stream bellows far underground in its wildest combination of tones, marks out the spot where the more extraordinary incidents have happened, and the stranger sights have been seen. Immediately beside the stone there is what seems to be the beginning of a path leading down to the water; but it stops abruptly at a tree,—the last in the descent,—and the green and dewy rock sinks beyond for more than a hundred feet, perpendicular as a wall. It was at the abrupt termination of this path that a Highlander once saw a beautiful child smiling and stretching out its little hand to him, as it hung half in air by a slender twig. But he well knew that it was no child, but an evil spirit, and that if he gave it the assistance which it seemed to crave, he would be pulled headlong into the chasm, and never heard of more. And the boulder still bears, it is said, on its side,—though I failed this evening to detect the mark,—the stamp, strangely impressed, of the household keys of Balconie.

The sun had now got as low upon the bill, and the ravine had grown as dark, as when, so long before, the Lady of Balconie took her last walk along the sides of the Auldgrande; and I struck up for the little alpine bridge of a few undressed logs, which has been here thrown across the chasm, at the height of a hundred and thirty feet over the water. As I pressed through the thick underwood, I startled a strange-looking apparition in one of the open spaces beside the gulf, where, as shown by the profusion of plants of vaccinium, the blaeberreries had greatly abounded in their season. It was that of an extremely old woman, cadaverously pale and miserable looking, with dotage glistening in her inexpressive, rheum-distilling eyes, and attired in a blue cloak, that had been homely when at its best, and was now exceedingly tattered. She had been poking with her crutch among the bushes, as if looking for berries; but my approach had alarmed her; and she stood muttering in Gaelic what seemed, from the tones and the repetition, to be a few deprecatory sentences. I addressed her in English, and inquired what could have brought to a place so wild and lonely, one so feeble and helpless. "Poor object!" she muttered in reply,—"poor object!—very hungry;" but her scanty English could carry her no further. I slipped into her hand a small piece of silver, for which she overwhelmed me with thanks and blessings; and, bringing her to one of the broader avenues, traversed by a road which leads out of the wood, I saw her fairly entered upon the path in the right direction, and then, retracing my steps, crossed the log-bridge. The old woman,—little, I should suppose from her appearance, under ninety,—was, I doubt not, one of our ill-provided Highland paupers, that starve under a law which, while it has dried up the genial streams of voluntary charity in the country, and presses hard upon the means of the humbler classes, alleviates little, if at all, the sufferings of the extreme poor. Amid present suffering and privation there had apparently mingled in her dotage some dream of early enjoyment,—a dream of the days when she had plucked berries, a little herd-girl, on the banks of the Auldgrande; and the vision seemed to have sent her out, far advanced in her second childhood, to poke among the bushes with her crutch.'

[http://gerald-massey.org.uk/miller/c\\_betsey\\_07.htm#VIII](http://gerald-massey.org.uk/miller/c_betsey_07.htm#VIII).

g) James Robertson used the Black Rock Gorge, near Evanton, as his model for 'the Black Jaws' featured in 'The Testament of Gideon Mack'. Hear James Robertson read from his novel '**The Testament of Gideon Mack**' (2006) which uses the Blackrock Gorge as the inspiration for this piece:

[http://www.ambaile.co.uk/en/item/item\\_audio.jsp?item\\_id=72952](http://www.ambaile.co.uk/en/item/item_audio.jsp?item_id=72952)

'Come on.' I said to Lorna and I put my arm through hers. 'Let's go and see the Black Jaws.'

We could already hear them. The last few days of rain had poured off the hills and

*swollen the upper reaches of the Keldo, and now thousands of gallons of water were being funnelled through the ravine every minute. The black cliffs were drumming with the sound of it. It was difficult to tell if the haze surrounding the trees was part of the fresh rainfall or spray rising from below. The path took a turn to the right and dropped a little towards a wooden bridge stretched across the ravine - an innovation since Augustus Menteith's day. Immediately to our left, at the path's turn, the ground fell away even more steeply, with trees stretching from it at odd angles, some almost horizontal, their roots like clawed hands clutching fiercely at the earth. The roar and reverberating boom of the river seemed to be coming up through the soil itself, through the layers of rock, through the trunks of the trees and the very soles of our boots. Even Jasper, who had shown only curiosity towards the crashing waves at the beach, trembled a little and slowed to a walk, keeping himself within easy reach of us. If he hadn't been behaving like this, I would have suggested to Lorna that she put him on the lead. As it was, there seemed little risk of him doing anything daft.*

*But I had reckoned without the appearance of the rabbit. As we came down to the bridge, there was a sudden burst of movement to our right, and a brown shape shot across the path and into the undergrowth on the other side. Jasper was after it in a second. Lorna and I both yelled at him, but he was oblivious to anything but the rabbit. I have never seen a dog move so fast. The pursuit was over in seconds, however, because the rabbit, plunging down through the wet grass towards the wetter ferns and creepers which marked the edge of the cliff, took one leap too many as it strove to outpace the dog. Suddenly it was in flight, launched from the last scrape of rock into the spray-filled air. It hung there for a long second and then dropped out of sight like a flung toy. We couldn't hear above the din but we could see Jasper's desperate efforts to halt the shower of mud and twigs and grass his back claws threw up as he skidded down the slope, and then he too disappeared. For one ghastly moment we waited to see his taut black body also flying into space, but there was nothing. Lorna let out a long scream, 'Jasper, O God, Jasper, O God, O God.' Nothing. And then, faintly above the terrible roar of the Black Jaws, a pitiful howl came back to us. Beyond our vision, but evidently perched somewhere on the edge of the precipice, Jasper was still alive.'*

(James Robertson has family connections with Easter Ross and Sutherland. He is the editor of 'Itchy Coo', the Scots language children's imprint, and has also edited two volumes by Hugh Miller, the Cromarty stonemason and geologist. His novel 'Joseph Knight' (2003) won both the Saltire Society and Scottish Arts Council book of the year awards while the 'The Testament of Gideon Mack' (2006) was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize and Commonwealth Writers Prize).

g) **Horses:** George (Sonny Dick) Munro used his horses to take out timber from the wood. One ex-mines pony 'Bobby', 2 Clydesdales from E. Ross, stabled at Culcairn Farm. Thinned the wood with Jimmy Armstrong; sawmill at the top of the village. (Sonny Dick recalls being paid 10 pence a tree cutting timber at Assynt in 1950. Worked all hours).