

Introduction:

This report provides a synopsis of the work carried out in the first year of operation, with details of education and community engagement, project development and funding acquisition, along with a summary of future work through 2013 – 2014. The main remit of the post is to deliver specific elements of the 5 year management pertaining to education and community; other aspects of the plan including interpretation and site surveying have also been addressed.

Education:

Initial work focused on establishing links with education establishments as potential users of the wood. This work included school visits, teacher taster days, in school training and classroom visits. Information about the wood and the activities that were available were provided and links to the curriculum were developed to aid teaching staff in realising links between outdoor learning and class based topics.

The following schools and colleges have been contacted due to their proximity to the woodland and the potential for site visits both for one off visits and longer term projects:

Primary	Kiltearn, Park, South Lodge, Ardross, Dingwall, Obsdale, Coulhill
Secondary	Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon
Other	St Clements special school, Evanton Nursery, Kiltearn Nursery, Scottish School of Forestry

Five teacher training sessions were run both in school and in the woods to support confidence and provide activities for teaching staff to enable self-led visits. A number of sessions were run in partnership with highland numeracy coordinator focusing on numeracy in the outdoors. During the period Aug 2012 – 2014 the following visits were made:

Evanton Nursery (ex playgroup)	27
Kiltearn Primary - nursery	7
Kiltearn Primary	20
Park Primary	7
St Clements (mainly primary)	3
Coulhill Primary	5
Alness Academy	2
Total number of school visits	71
Total number of pupils	1097

Resources:

Various resources have been purchased following successful applications to funding bodies. Following a meeting with the Forestry Commission and on the understanding that EWCC would engage with education groups within the remit of FCS (ones we were working with already) a comprehensive tool list was purchased. This has allowed the E&O coordinator to deliver more tailored engagement and to support both conservation tasks and training delivery. EWCC now has a comprehensive collection of quality tools and resources. These include:

- Complete Forest school training and delivery kits (shelters, fire kit, small hand tools)
- Mountain bike / cycle maintenance tools
- Footpath and conservation task specific tools (mattock, pinch bars, spades)
- Specialist conservation tools (high pruners, power loppers, silky saws)
- Logosol mobile saw mill (from 10 glens cycle group)

Currently all tools are stored within a garage, for the more commonly used hand tools it is the intention that these are to be stored in the secure cabin for ease of use. All the above mentioned tools with the exception of the Logosol are used weekly by visiting groups both for education and conservation purposes. The addition of these as EWCC resources has made a great difference to the options available in terms of task and site management.

Future:

Maintaining links with current schools and promoting the site to those which have not previously visited. Currently the main barrier to visiting the wood is that of transport. One-off visits can be organised and funded by the school but repeated visits in many cases are not viable. Dingwall Academy will now use Evanton Wood to run a programme (9 weeks in total) of Forest school / conservation tasks for pupils within the academy starting Sept 11th 2013. Evanton Wood is now established as a site for the delivery of outdoor learning and the support of the Curriculum for Excellence.

An education pack is currently being developed and September will see the first draft being offered for comment by teachers and other education professionals. It is expected that a final draft will be finished by the end of 2013 for use in the 2014 spring term.

Community Engagement:

A number of community focused events and programmes have been run to promote the use of the wood and the amenity it offers. In partnership with Highlife highland we have run week long cycle skills programmes, seasonal events such as Easter puzzle trail, Christmas craft event and themed events such as squirrel day, bird box building (in partnership with RSPB) and mini-beast hunts. The following is a breakdown of number in attendance for the events:

Launch day and walk	140
Various -Bird box, squirrel, Easter puzzle, Christmas, bio blitz	256
Mountain bike skills	152
Total numbers	548

Future:

Continue to establish the wood as a provider of events both seasonal and themed events for the local and wider community. To work with specialists to offer a diverse range of activities and events in partnership with both the Board and other organisations (Highlife Highland etc)

Developments:

A number of projects have been developed during the first year. These range from infrastructure and facility development through to training. A breakdown of which can be see below:

Site infrastructure:

- Pond development – in partnership with Froglife (work undertaken with a number of local schools)
- Onsite cabin – facility development funded through FEI grant
- Orienteering course and site mapping – in partnership with INVOC
- Mountain bike trail development – club creation to develop more link trails
- Forest school sites – educational sites for use by visiting groups.

Funding:

The following funds have been accessed by the E&O coordinator for the site:

FEI partnership fund	£2500
10 Glens cycle fund	£600
Forestry Commission Scotland grant	£1550
Dingwall academy	£600
Pond Life grant allocation (2014)	£4193
Big Lottery fund (TCL & 1 st aid training)	£2000
Total for year 2013-2014	£11443

Training:

The following training courses have been run / delivered by the E&O officer:

- TCL Training – 7 local candidates through the leadership course
- Outdoor learning – courses for teaching staff in using the woodland for curriculum links
- Mountain bike maintenance course – Focused on families to help maintain bikes
- 1st aid – run by Cory Jones (outdoor 1st aid)

Additional:

There is scope within the remit of the E&O coordinator to expand engagement with groups that would benefit from woodland activities. Currently groups from Birchwood recovery centre, referrals from social services along with volunteers (both individual and groups) have expressed interest in utilising the wood or have visited the wood on specific days. In addition to these the Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV) has been using the wood on a number of occasions to help with the conservation orientated tasks.

The development of the cabin and sheltered area within the wood will offer groups more scope in using the wood as this would provide shelter and a 'base' for activities. Evanton Nursery has expressed a keen interest to extend their time in the woods with their group when such a facility is in place. This facility would also allow a central base for the delivery of such things as teacher

training sessions, mountain bike skills tuition, TCL courses and offer a focal point for volunteer days and the storage of Evanton wood tools and equipment. Through an application to the '10 glens' cycle project, EWCC have been given a Logosol mobile wood mill, this will be used to mill timber sourced in the wood to produce the cladding required for the cabin.

Surveys:

The following surveys have been conducted within the wood:

Moths; bryophytes; mammals; Invertebrates; habitat (phase 2 survey); amphibians; fungi; birds.

The results of these surveys have been collated and added to the Evanton Wood records.

Conclusion:

The post has so far met all expectations for the E&O coordinator and has been an enjoyable one both in terms of aims and objectives and development opportunities. Time allocation for the role (approx. 20hrs per week) has at times been an issue.

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Simon Harry

