

## Outdoor volunteering meeting 12 November 2018, at Evanton Community Woods

Adrian Clark and some of his team - Douglas Wilson and Dave Smith - showed visiting members of the outdoor volunteering group around [Evanton Community Woods](#), impressing all with the range and skill of the work undertaken by volunteers since the wood was purchased in 2012.



The cabin close to the entrance of the wood was built with wood donated by Forestry Commission Scotland and the Novar estate, with much of the work being undertaken by volunteers under professional supervision.

The area around the cabin is currently having some remodelling, funded by [Paths for All](#), to make it more dementia friendly - this includes levelling ground and using smooth surfaces, having tables that are easy to access, and signs that are brief and use bright colours. This will make Evanton the UK's first dementia-friendly woodland.



Simon Harry, education worker for the woods, has already been working with people with dementia over several years, and now has funding from [Life Changes Trust](#) to deliver 2 x 10 week programmes in 2019. Previous funding has enabled them to bring in experts from, for example, [Creativity in Care](#), and to carry out activities, such as fishing and cycling.



Simon also works with visiting school groups, including two academies. Local special needs schools also come along to the woods, and their pupils advised on what they would like to see in the play area - which has lots of tunnels and balancing areas to explore. Some of the schools are now familiar enough with the woods that they are happy to run their sessions.

Adrian commented that they have been lucky in having a number of skilled volunteers, and that they have found that moving to a regular Friday morning slot, has been good for maintaining interest and building friendships. They also try to establish bartering systems where they can - for instance, a providing a stock of wood in exchange for use of tractor in the woods.

Ponds have been created in the woods, by working with [Froglife](#), and dense areas of hemlock now hold many secret trails. The latest large project is to build a shelter (pictured) - hexagonal in shape, and of massive timber construction - this is largely being built by volunteers, under the supervision of Henry Fosbrooke, who worked with the group on the cabin.