Maryburgh Community Woodlands

Have your say on the draft Woodland Management Plan

Future Vision – This is what we want the woodland to be for our community

A diverse and resilient woodland of varied age classes with historic interest which our community can safely access, enjoy, and benefit from while also reducing the impacts of climate change on the woodlands through good practice.

The woodland is park-like in places and natural in others. Young trees are visible in the understory and veteran trees dating before 1850 are noticeable in the overstory. There is a rich and diverse flora on the woodland floor which varies throughout the woodland, highlighting areas of wet ground and micro-habitats. Local wildlife populations use the variety of habitats present for nesting and foraging. Paths, both formal and informal, are present throughout the woodland and waymarked paths are maintained for all abilities. The woodland is well signposted with informative signs allowing users to gather a greater sense of place and understanding. It is a place for the community to enjoy and provides an escape to a natural space for both young and old alike to explore.

Objectives – These are our goals

1	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community
2	Maintaining accessibility for all members of our Community
3	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland
4	Ensuring funding is available to enable good practice measures to be implemented
5	Highlighting and maintaining the cultural heritage of the Woodland
6	Enabling ongoing engagement with the community and commitment to community led decision making

Planned Activities

Core path regrading and surfacing (flooding abatement)	Woodland litter clean up
Core path brush clearing	Website updates
Informal path brush and down tree cleaning	Dangerous tree survey
Entrance sign installation	Dangerous tree mitigations
First round beech and hemlock clearance	Replacement tree planting
	Biodiversity monitoring
	Rhododendron pruning

Provide your thoughts and comments by 13th April:
Email maryburghcommunitywoodland@gmail.com
Or drop off written responses at the Maryburgh Amenities Centre
Visit the Hub webpage, https://www.maryburghhub.co.uk/maryburgh-community-woodland/ or use the QR code

Description of woodlands

The woodland is an irregularly shaped area of amenity land in the small village of Maryburgh, located 13 miles north west of Inverness. A relatively small but diverse woodland, Maryburgh Community Woodland extends to 3.69 ha. It is predominantly a semi-natural woodland of native broadleaf species mixed with exotic specimens dating from the 17th and 18th century. The woodlands sit between two developments, Dungalss Road and Birch Drive, and are easily accessible from Maryburgh village centre. A network of formal and informal paths run through the woodlands and are interconnected to longer local walks through Brahan Estate and along the Connon River.

The woodland was purchased in 2022 by the Maryburgh Amenities Company to ensure this important community asset was not lost to private development.

History & Past Management

Maryburgh Community Woodland, previously known as Dunglass Woodlands, were part of Brahan Estate from the 17th century through to the 1970s when it was purchased by Morrison Construction as part of the Birch Drive development. Following that it was passed to Anglian Water plc from 1989 to 2002 at which time they become Anglian Water Limited and then in 2003 an internal reorganization handed the land over to the AWG Group Ltd. The land suddenly came up for auction in late 2022 when it was purchased by the Maryburgh Amenities Company (MAC) as a community woodland for the residents of Maryburgh and the wider community.

Historically Dunglass Woodlands were a traditional policy woodland and formed part of a Designed Landscape (Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes as Brahan Estate GDL) around Brahan Castle and the wider estate grounds. It was part of four main boulevards leading to Brahan castle grounds. Since that time the woodlands have been cut off from the remaining Brahan woodlands by village expansion, farming, and other utilities. Half of the woodland is of a younger age class following major water utility works in the 1980s/1990s which now run underneath part of the northeastern woodlands. The other half of the woodlands remain ancient of ‘Long Established Plantation Origin’.

Natural regeneration of beech and exotic conifers is widespread, limiting understory diversity in places. Main paths are overgrown by shrubs and small trees, impairing public access and path maintenance is also needed to remediate drainage issues and flooding which have eroded surfaces and made paths inaccessible for mobility impaired visitors.

This woodland itself has not been actively maintained for a number of decades and dangerous trees are present requiring works to maintain public safety. A small number of dangerous trees were taken down in 2023 but further works will be required. Ongoing regular maintenance will be required to ensure the woodlands remain healthy and resilient moving forward and that the special character of this woodland in its historic setting is not lost while also ensuring public access is maintained.

Woodland Composition

The woodland is mainly comprised of common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) (60%) and silver/downy birch (*Betula pendula/pubescens*) (30%) with a wide range of other species forming the remainder (10%). Beech and birch trees on site range in maturity from saplings to over mature specimen. Beech and hemlock are freely regenerating on site. The exotic conifers on site can be found in the lower south area of the woodland. These large, impressive trees were planted to form part of the wider Brahan Estate in the 1800s. The conifers can be found in the woodland, set back from houses and roads.

Mature tree species forming the canopy include:
Grand fir – *Abies grandis*
Silver fir – *Abies alba*
Giant sequoia - *Sequoiadendron giganteum*
Monkey puzzle - *Araucaria araucana*
Douglas fir - *Pseudotsuga menziesii*
Monterey cypress - *Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*
Scots pine – *Pinus sylvestris*
Sessile oak – *Quercus patraea*
Common beech – *Fagus sylvatica*

Tree species forming the understory include:
Common beech – *F. sylvatica*
Silver/downy birch – *B. pendula/ pubescens*
Sessile oak – *Q. patraea*
Scots pine – *P. sylvestris*
Wych elm – *Ulmus glabra*
Holly – *Ilex aquifolium*
Common ash – *Fraxinus excelsior*
Hazel – *Corylus avellana*
Goat willow – *Salix caprea*
Rowan – *Sorbus aucuparia*
European larch – *Larix decidua*
Cotoneaster – *Cotoneaster franchetii*
Elder – *Sambucus nigra*
Hawthorn – *Crataegus monogyna*
Western Hemlock – *Tsuga heterophylla*

Feature/Issue	Description	linked objective	Constraint	Opportunity	strategy	priority	Potential threat to/from
Natural regeneration	Understory regeneration of beech and hemlock, diversity of veteran trees not being replaced	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Sense natural regeneration in areas of hemlock and beech, shading out the understory	Selectively thin regeneration to favour under represented species such as holly, hazel, and hawthorn	Manage regeneration to thin out areas of dense beech, remove hemlock regeneration, and encourage regeneration of underrepresented species such as holly, hazel and hawthorn.	M	Climate Change (e.g. unsuitable species/provenance, lack of diversity, uniform structure)
Veteran trees	Wind Damage from past and future storms affecting veteran trees and overall mature canopy	Highlighting and maintaining the cultural heritage of the Woodland	Over mature trees are not being replaced through regeneration or planting	Maintain veteran trees to preserve historic links to Brahan castle as well as contributing to late seral woodland structure. Ensure succession of memory trees through planting.	Plant a new memory tree and place signage to commemorate community ownership. Place interpretive board near veteran specimen trees highlighting the history of the site. Maintain condition of veteran trees through pruning or removal where unsafe. Replace future veteran tree losses, consideration given to future memory trees for milestone events.	M	Environment (wind damage)
Dangerous trees	Tree of varying ages and conditions present within the woodland	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Condition of woodland is declining without regular maintenance	Monitor condition of trees and remove public risk through pruning and felling as required	Annual surveys carried out to inform arboriculture works required to maintain trees in a safe state.	H	Dangerous trees
flooding	Flooding along paths and public roads	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Current path drainage creates flooding issues	Upgrade paths to drain and avoid concentrating surface flows	Improve drainage along core paths to prevent flooding.	H	Environment (flooding)
Core Path conditions	Paths are in poor condition and not maintained	Maintaining accessibility for all members of our Community	Vegetation growth encroaches on path and surface materials degraded or worn	Improve path conditions through weeding and resurfacing	Regularly clear paths of vegetation. Resurface paths to an all-abilities standard. Provide rest points along the core paths for those who may find walking the full path challenging.	H	Public Access
Informal paths	Multiple desire lines through the woodlands with some forming paths which change over time	Maintaining accessibility for all members of our Community	informal paths are of irregular use and change over time	ensure informal access along desire lines remain and are allowed to change over time	Continuing to allow informal access through the woodland along desire lines and unwaymarked areas, ensuring there remains a sense of exploration and escape.	L	Public Access
signage	Signage is currently poor and no signage notes community ownership	Maintaining accessibility for all members of our Community	There is no signage in place notifying visitors of the community woodland	Place signs, interpretive boards and or other markers to inform visitors about the woodland, use branding generated by local schools to create a logo	Place signs, interpretive boards and other markers to inform visitors about the woodland.	M	Public Access
bats	Habitat suitable for bats and bat roosts exists within the woodlands	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Potential for bat roosts to be present on site	Maintain good foraging habitat for bats	Monitor woodland edge conditions and maintain to maximise insect numbers and bat foraging.	L	Environment (protected species)
owls	Habitat suitable for owls including large old trees is present	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Potential for owls to have roosts on site	Maintain mature canopy and consider owl boxes	Install owl box.	L	Environment (protected species)
Red squirrels	Suitable habitat for red squirrels with known occasional presence of red squirrels in the woodland	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Potential for squirrels to have dreys on site	Maintain canopy and seed producing tree species	Ensure percentage of Scots pine and other seed producing trees are maintained or increased.	L	Environment (protected species)
Rhododendron ponticum	Rhododendron can be found in small numbers	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Present in small numbers, one large bush of local importance	Remove smaller plants and consider measures to reduce seed spread	Removal of young rhododendron plants. Replacement over time of old rhododendron ponticum with non-invasive rhododendron from Brahan Estate gardens.	L	Invasive/Noxious species (e.g. Rhododendron, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed)
Overhead utilities	Large overhead powerline running adjacent to part of the woodland	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Potential for mature conifer to fall within risk zones of powerlines	Maintain regular communication with utility provider	Consult with network operators.	L	Public Safety
Buried utilities	Underground water mains and high pressure mains within the woodland	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Water mains running under woodland	Maintain regular communication with water supplier	Consult with water line managers.	L	Public Safety
Roadside trees	Trees along Dunglass road are leaning heavily toward the roadside	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Risk to road users from falling branches or windblown trees	Maintain roadside trees in safe condition, monitor annually	Carry out annual tree safety assessments.	M	Dangerous trees

Antisocial behaviour	Litter and garden waste tipping, Not happening at the moment, and its not vandalism as such but breaking trees to make structures, or just to break trees etc mainly kids.	Making the Woodland safe for members of the Community	Litter and tipping of garden waste, also dog waste, lack of young peoples exposure to community woodland to generate a sense of stewardship	Working with Council, provide rubbish bins at main entrances, consider signage to inform community of threats to woodland from tipping garden waste. Monitoring woodland use for recreation (including impromptu 'shelter building' by community to ensure it is keeping with the vision of the woodland). Work with local schools to incorporate environmental education and woodland visits.	Enacting website based reporting system for occurrences of anti-social activities and site signage. Annual review of findings by Maryburgh Community Woodlands Group.	M	Anti-social behaviour (e.g., arson, fly-tipping, unauthorised vehicle access, vandalism)
Woodland health	There are no known health issues currently present	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Unknown baseline condition of woodland species and habitats	monitor woodland health	Set up a programme of monitoring using citizen science approach and local schools where possible to record conditions and monitor for signs of declining woodland health.	M	Woodland health
entryways	main access points are poorly signed	Maintaining accessibility for all members of our Community	No indication of formal entrances or 'gateways' of the community woodland	Signpost the 5 entryways to the woodland	Erect entrance signs.	H	Public Access
Biodiversity (general)	Deer browsing is limiting diversity of tree species regeneration	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	Limited historic records of previous woodland conditions	Develop annual monitoring programmes using citizen led recording where possible (citizen science)	Developing a citizen science approach for monitoring biodiversity with planned survey volunteer days to coincide with national surveys (red squirrel survey for example) and to maintain records of biodiversity assets and extents within the woodland. Focus on micro-habitats where possible.	M	Mammal damage: deer, rabbits, hares, grey squirrels
Wet ground	Areas of wet ground with associated flora are present	Developing and implementing practices to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Woodland	areas of wet ground are not mapped or otherwise identified	identify and monitor areas of wet ground	Identifying and mapping areas of wet ground.	L	Water & Soil
Decision making	Maryburgh Community Woodland Group established to manage the woodland	Enabling ongoing engagement with the community and commitment to community led decision making	Limited viewpoints put forward from which to make decisions about the management of the woodlands, lack of young people involved in the woodland group	Scoping the woodland Management Plan through the community, making it available on the website, and forming of the Maryburgh Community Woodlands Group from volunteers within the local community (at time of writing this was 10 local residents)	Continue to operate the Maryburgh Community Woodland Group.	H	Community Benefit


MAC LPID Boundary
Core Paths
MAC Woodland Compartments
OpenStreetMap
Google Satellite
3a
2b
1a
2a
Maryburgh Community Woodlands
Compartment Map
1:2500
0
100
200 m