

Dunbar Lochend Community Woodlands

Woodland Management Plan

February 2026

Woodland Description

Dunbar Lochend Community Woodland is an attractive urban woodland located to the southern boundaries of the coastal town of Dunbar, East Lothian and sitting to the north of the A1 dual carriageway. It constitutes approximately nine compartments, mapped, totalling 18.72ha hemmed to the north, east and south to south-west by urban development. The woodland is low-lying, gently undulating on generalised brown/alluvial soils imperfectly drained. Additional woodland areas surveyed tied to the Dunbar Community Development and Heritage Trust, (DCDHT), introduce circa 15ha of woodland across 4 additional compartment areas, mapped as compartments 10 – 13, creating a sizable community woodland resource.

The Lochend Woodlands hold two clear designations: Long Established of Plantation Origin, (LEPO) and containing a small sub-compartment of Nearly Native Woodland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland southwest of Leslie Way and bisecting Baillie Court property garden boundaries.

The mature woodlands are now predominantly composed of Sycamore, Ash and Pine, with Oak, Beech, Wych Elm, Lime, Silver Birch, Common Alder and Willow sp. also present in varying ratios. There have been Sitka Spruce and Norway Spruce which have since been thinned extensively, plus remaining examples of Cedar, Walnut, Yew, Douglas Fir and Grand Fir found in compartments adjacent to the Old Garden area now used as a storage and ‘Gathering Space’ south of Kellie Road. There is significant understory cover, almost impenetrable in several areas, often comprised of Rhododendron and/or Elder with Holly and a few non-native shrubs such as Snowberry and Mahonia sp. In some areas of wetter ground, and heavy Sycamore canopy, the floor-level botanical mixture is limited and would benefit from thinning to allow air and sunlight to access the forest floor. Ash trees are also present throughout the woodland compartments and have been historically used to enhance areas of felling. Sadly, many standing examples exhibit significant signs of Ash dieback, (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), and some will need to be removed to manage risk in a heavily used woodland.



To the south of Brodie Road there is also a wooded wetland area focussed on an old Pond with significant ground-level and understory development. Willow and Elder are also present here as are what appear to be Hazel and Sycamore cultivated with future coppice in mind.

Further stands are present adjacent to the open area where the community pump track sits. These areas exhibit soft brown soils, and in some areas, lower-lying wet ground. The soil topography lends itself to diverse enhancement planting. The distinct stand of semi-mature Scots Pine by the Primary School is an excellent example of native Scots Pine in a coastal environment. The high and relatively light canopy lends the area to community engagement. However, it should be noted that more anti-social engagement and an unofficial firepit have already been instigated!

The wetland area, and signs of open drainage located behind the Hallhill Steading are of compact environmental diversity. It would be recommended to explore the drainage infrastructure further in the hopes of maintaining the area. Similarly, sympathetic thinning of Sycamore in the vicinity will help enhance the wetland edge and hopefully allow for the easy maintenance of future culverts or gabions. These may or may-not be for future addition to maintain the areas in question. *Typha Sp. (latifolia?)*, Is present both here and in the wetter area of Compartments Two and Five and seed heads are clearly 'harvested' by locals. While understandable, some interpretation signage around the wetter ground might prevent risky incursions into the wetland areas and minimise disturbance of localised flora and fauna. Perhaps the inclusion of wildlife hides/blinds, using materials sourced from woodland activities and potential felling work could be constructed to 'focus' public activity and engagement in these areas. There are also a significant number of tree tags surrounding this wetland area and clarity should be sought as to their origin and reason.

Given the more recent urban development of Dunbar, the mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland compartments are a well-trammelled socio-environmental and biodiverse resource for the local community. Communication around the tree health of boundary trees by properties is important as many think that removing heavier boughs and branches are beneficial. It should be noted that wherever possible, removal of tree limbs is detrimental in the mid to long-term integrity of overall tree health and a means of communicating this with residents might aid understanding and remove undue pressure on the DCWG.

Annual monitoring of boundary trees is highly recommended in the overall management of the woodland and a few trees across the compartments surveyed should be monitored regularly due to their size and overall proximity to property. Prevailing weather and wind for Dunbar are South South-Westerly and average 18mph at their height in January.



The general age and make-up of the woodland would suggest that the prevailing winds are well buffered although it is always difficult to fully mitigate against more severe weather events. Coupled to a drier climate, on average, tree crown-thinning for larger Sycamore alongside residential properties may reduce the risks associated. Specialist advice should be considered to the veracity of this type of intervention by further Arboricultural Risk Survey and may go some way to meet the common-sense risk management of urban woodland by the DCWG.



Opportunities

- The timber market for quality processible firewood is currently strong and so there is sound mileage in the low-impact timber extraction/thinning from these woodlands. This might provide a financial silver-lining when twinned to the necessary removal of Ash trees throughout the woodland compartments neighbouring Kellie Road and highlighted by East Lothian Council.
- Thinning of selective Sycamore across a variety of compartments should allow for additional biodiversity development and potential new planting to drive further enjoyment and community engagement. The currently held Thinning License is applicable to the areas highlighted in the thinning map appendix. A thinning plan should be included as part of any updated Felling License Application considering recommendations.
- Indicated currently, some age diversity and natural regeneration is present throughout the woodland, which makes for a great starting point and should hopefully provide woodland stability considering more recent weather events. There is an opportunity to increase this species diversity and reduce non-natives, Rhododendron specifically, while hopefully encouraging more native trees to fill the gaps. Opening the woods and allowing younger trees and shrubs to establish as an understory will also improve the age and height diversity within the woods which gives greater diversity of habitat for wildlife.
- Proactive management of some dominant understory species would also allow more light into the woodland floor, specifically Elder that can prove invasive, which should improve the ecological and amenity value and make the woods a more pleasant place for varied flora, fauna and further recreation.
- Careful thinning along with some pruning of broadleaves should improve timber quality for the future, increasing stability and allaying concerns of residents on the woodland boundaries. Similarly, material 'byproduct' could also fuel the Community Solar Kiln products and further enhance the Dunbar Community Woodland Group engagement outcomes, old and new.
- There is good access to the woodland area which will aid both the management activities and the sale of timber, improving potential returns from future timber sales if needed. There is an opportunity, particularly once the woodlands are thinned to carry out remedial footpath maintenance and drainage as highlighted in the DCWG Urban Woodland Management Plan.



Constraints

- While a LEPO and Nearly Native Woodland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland designations exist, the immediate pressure to remove diseased Ash by East Lothian Council should ease through further thinning works in Cpt 9c. This could be done on an individual tree basis and allow like-for-like tree replacement rather than FGS tree densities.
- There are historical designations for battlefields from the Battle of Dunbar, some distance to the north-east of Lochend Woods. Whilst these designations are not thought to be a problem due to lack of proximity to the woods it would require noting in subsequent funding or felling applications.
- There is little evidence of protected species within the woodland area. Whilst this makes the planning of harvesting operations simpler it also means there is an opportunity to encourage more wildlife into the woods. Grey Squirrel damage should be factored in the planting of new trees and shrubs. While not noted in great number, and with little noted squirrel damage to trees, some monitoring may be necessary in the future. Acers, (Maple/Sycamore), can be very susceptible to Grey Squirrel damage as they look to access the copious sap.
- Significantly, there are more recently tagged trees within the DCDHT/DCWG areas. It is suggested that the suspected Tree Preservation Order designation on these is sought from the ELC Tree Officer as it may impact on pruning works required.
- There are Roe deer present in the woodlands and the surrounding area. Future tree establishment should be possible with the use of tree shelters, and larger tree standards where possible.



Long term objectives

- Selectively remove trees, with initial focus on some boundary trees around the edge of compartment 3. Specifically, there are Douglas Fir, Corsican Pine and Large Sycamore which could be felled and processed for DCWG usable materials and firewood projects. Naturalised Sycamore can be thinned, coppiced and utilized as a quick growing resource to further community engagement opportunities.
- Increase the age and species diversity within the woodlands to improve resilience to severe weather events and potential disease threats.
- Let more light into the forest floor to improve ground-level flora and fauna.
- Encourage further natural regeneration to provide future forest cover and nursery material for community group projects.
- Manage the presence of non-native trees and encourage more natives increasing ornithological, entomological and mycological diversity within the woodland.
- Use of orchard species, both understory and as low canopy trees to increase the engagement opportunities for a wider demographic. Use blossoming shrubs, such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Damson and Cherry Plum to aid softening edges/open ground and provide foraging opportunities for all demographics. Consider the use of Apple, Cherry and Crab Apple to produce further edible resource for people and wildlife while also visually enhancing the woodland edges and glades with blossoming species.
- Retain deadwood and cut-to-waste material in environment piles to assist in environmental diversification and understory presentation.
- Soften woodland edges so there is less of a stark contrast between the woodland areas and the surrounding urban environment.
- Some focus on the control of Willow and path edge species around Kellie Road should be considered.
- Improve the quality of timber growing within the woods for potential future revenue to allow community engagement projects into the future.
- Consider the use of wildlife hides/blinds adjacent to the wetland areas with interpretational signage to focus community engagement.
- Address path network as per access desires of the DCC and in line with public flow for the DCWG to help prevent ‘unofficial’ path and cycle track development.



Proposed management activities and Methods of work

Initially, (2026 – 2028), the focus should be to remove diseased Ash dieback trees. The focus should be along the roadside compartments 9a and 9c on Kellie Road. This is of absolute priority. Cooperation with East Lothian Council should be pursued as this may significantly aid local community consultation requirements and public access issues in woodland areas during felling works. Additional individual tree felling to the NW corner of 9c could be used to create a community orchard with like for like tree replacement. Some Ash dieback specimens adjacent to paths within the wood should also be felled. It may be worth considering some standing stems left for environmental purposes when trees are located within the wood. High stumps can also be formed into seats or carving installations. Ash and Sycamore thinning is proposed in compartments 1,2,3, 5 and 9c to enhance the financial viability of time pressured works.

Woodland Improvement Grant and Woodlands in and Around Towns grant options can be sought for enhancement, signage and access projects, but the use of grants for proposed initial commercial thinning wouldn't be available. It is felt that the quality of firewood timber would yield a return above the cost of management, felling and extraction.

Operations should be carried out sensitively, hand cutting and with smaller low-ground pressure machinery to protect soil structure, which is vital for maintaining a healthy ecosystem and protecting the roots of standing trees.

To follow, (2027-2029), and to mitigate against further potential storm damage, it is recommended to consider the removal of several trees in Compartment 3 along the residential boundary of John Muir Crescent. This is an area where prevailing wind is more likely to push fallen boughs timber and trees towards property. It is also a suitable testbed for the pulling back of the woodland edge for replanting with low canopy trees of various species to enhance relations with residents and mitigate risk for the DCWG and DCC.

The removal of a stand of Scots Pine, identified as Compartment 12, was discussed in initial meetings. As a highly appropriate and attractive stand of native coastal Scots Pine, this seems highly unnecessary and heavy-handed considering this survey plan. An open and well-lit understory is present, and the stand appears stable considering prevailing winds.

Natural regeneration should be selectively encouraged with the exposure of the top layer of soil in places. Some planting may be required to help target species establish and to improve species diversity, but natural regeneration would be favoured. Indeed, desired regeneration can be transplanted to different areas as 'whips' creating further volunteer and community engagement projects to enhance the woodlands for all.



On a fertile site, control of competing ground and understory vegetation will also be important if a desired flora composition is to be achieved, particularly if they have been planted. Manual and/or mechanical means of weed control should be suitable to avoid chemical usage. Removal of Rhododendron in Compartment 13 should be done pushing it to the western boundary. Some Rhododendron, as an existing resource, may provide potential wind-breaking and reduce the impact of windblow into this wetter area. Further cultivation of low canopy Common Alder, Goat Willow and Downy Birch could infill areas of windblow adjacent to the path between Dunbar Primary, Lochend Campus and Fairbairn Way. This would also mirror the growth around the wetland drain and low-lying ground south-east of Lochend Kennels.

Ideally some pruning of broadleaves will be carried out to improve form and mitigate resident concerns over selected trees on the boundary. On-going communication and education regarding the healthy nature of edge trees with residents will hopefully negate excessive pruning. Forest Research and the National Tree Safety Group provide published guidance on the '[Common sense risk management of Trees](#)' 2024. Information derived from this publication could also form information for interpretation boards located at focal points within the woodland.

A felling license to cover potential operations within the additional DCDHT, compartments 10-13, will be required for carrying out any felling or thinning operations within potential new compartments, mapped as 10-13. Communication with [East Lothian Council Amenity Services and Tree Officer](#), to ascertain the reasoning behind extensive tree tagging on the northern, eastern and southern area of Compartment 13 should be undertaken. It may be related to construction work carried out adjacent to the bike pump track and play area, but tree tags should be registered to the Amenity Services as part of the construction survey process.

Appendices

- Lochend Woodland DCWG Compartments Map
- Lochend Woodland DCWG Plan Map
- Lochend Woodlands DCWGMP Compartment Schedule
- NTSG – Common Sense Risk Management of Trees, Published Guidance

