

Leadburn Wood Extension  
FLCW Business Plan



## Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland

The organisation Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland (FLCW) was formally registered as a company (SC286916) on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. It was formed to benefit the communities of Leadburn and District. The principal objective was to manage community land and associated assets as part of the protection of Scotland's natural environment. FLCW is registered as a charity: SC037052.

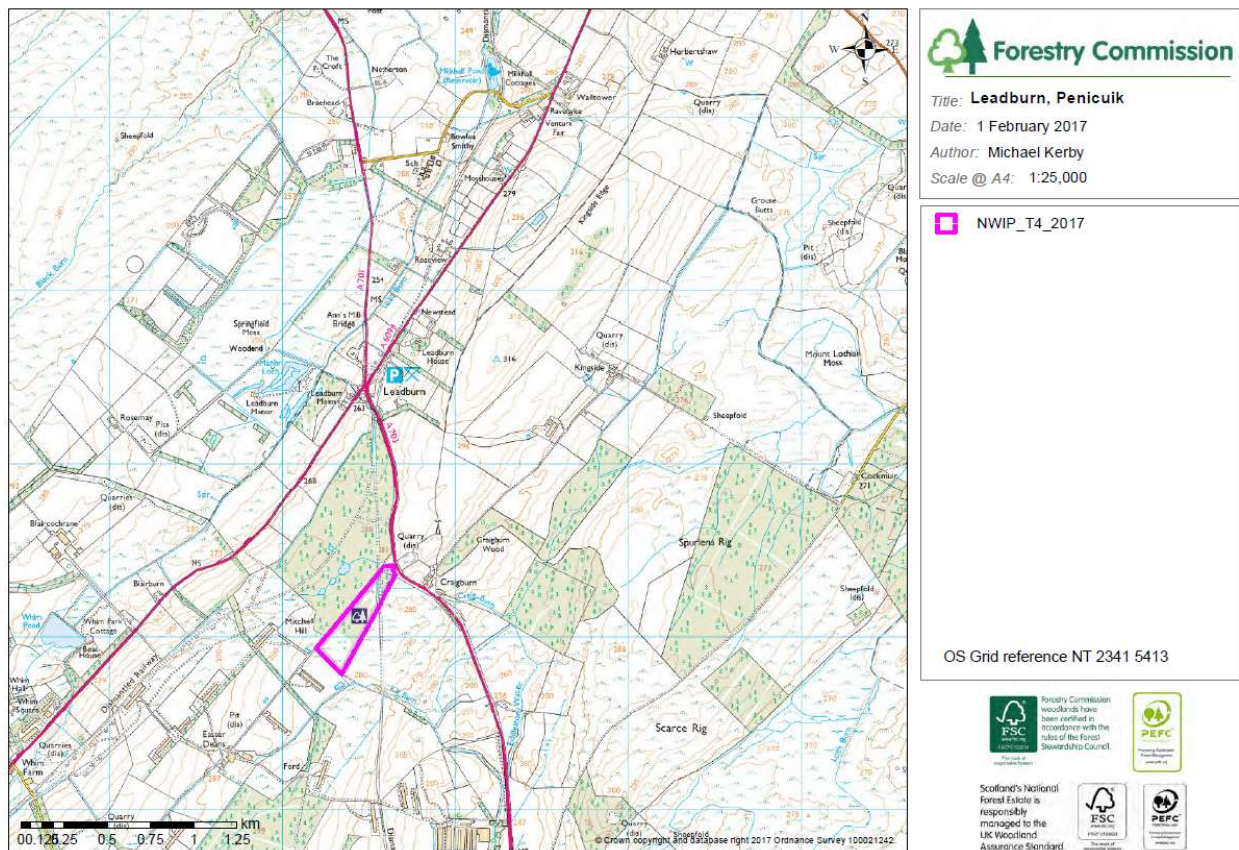
FLCW bought 44 hectares of land from the Forestry Commission (FC) under the National Forest Land Scheme. The purchase was completed in February 2007 and the community woodland was formally opened in April 2007.

The site at the time of purchase had been largely clear felled with brash and tree stumps left in place. Over the last 11 years, FLCW has carried out a lot of work to make this a pleasant site for community use. FLCW has planted trees, created ponds and paths. Part of the site has been restored as a raised bog.

FLCW is run by a committee which has six members at present. The committee usually meets ten times a year and meetings are open to all, whether members or not. The main officers are a chairman and a treasurer. These two officers are elected at General Meetings that are held annually. Audited accounts for FLCW and reports on activities are available through the Companies House web site. FLCW has two types of members:

- Full members who pay an annual subscription.
- Supporters who have bought Christmas trees.

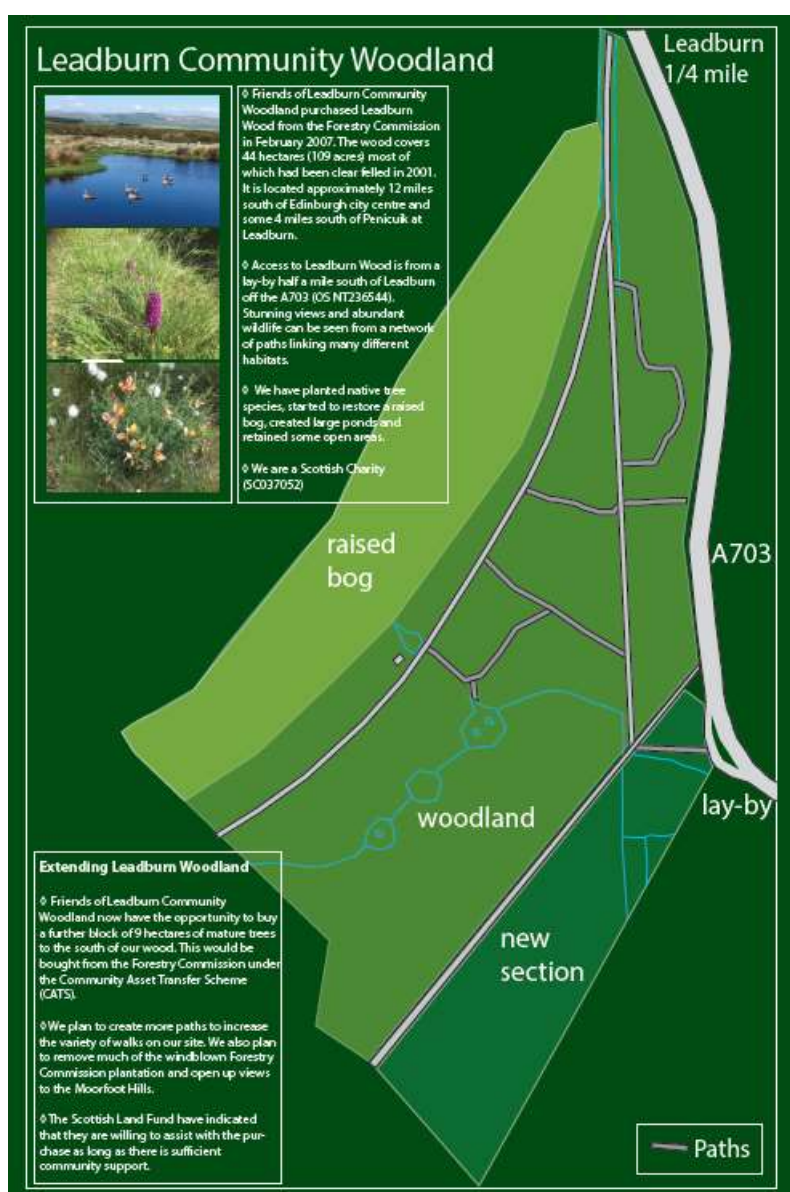
At the end of December 2017, FLCW had 7 individual and 26 family members. In addition, there were 133 supporters.



The annual membership fee is £5 for single members and £10 for two or more at the same address. The fees were set at this level in 2005 and at that time provided the only funds for running the organisation. The fees have stayed at this level ever since. In recent years, FLCW has given free membership to anyone who has bought a Christmas tree.

## Forestry Commission Block at Leadburn

The 44 hectares of community woodland was originally part of a rather larger site. The Forestry Commission (FC) retained 9.4 hectares of the site because there were experimental plots present and the research work had not been completed. This remaining block was offered for sale under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) at the beginning of 2017. The location is Easter Deans, Leadburn, Eddleston EH46 7BG. FLCW would like to extend its existing site by buying this block.





The block for sale runs along a north-east to south-west axis. It is bounded on the north-west edge by a rough road and is crossed by the track of a disused railway line that runs north to south. The area east of the site is a damp area of bog vegetation which is sometimes used as rough grazing. The land to the south west of the site is a commercial chicken farm.

The FLCW proposal is to use the extra woodland to increase the variety of walks available to visitors and to open up views to the south by removing many of the existing conifers. The cleared area would be restored as a raised bog. An internal FC report by Anderson (2013) recommended that the benefits of raised bog restoration on this site would be substantial.

The schematic map shows the relative positions of the two sites.

## Community Consultation

The FLCW Certificate of Incorporation defines its community as comprising the postcode units EH25, EH45 and EH46. This is a large area which includes West Linton as well as the towns of Penicuik and Peebles. The FLCW web site has always used a rather narrower definition as the rural communities associated with Eddleston, Howgate and Lamancha.

The region that includes these communities is dominated by rough grazing for raising sheep and beef cattle. There is a large chicken business (Glenrath Farms) and there are several private estates. This implies that there is little scope for outdoor activities such as walking unless residents travel some distance away from home.

FLCW carried out a community consultation between October and December 2017. This tried to assess the level of support for the plans to buy the FC block at Leadburn. The consultation concentrated on the rural communities of Carlops, Eddleston, Howgate, Lamancha and West Linton. Two main methods were used to ascertain support; leaflets and online surveys.

All of the 228 respondents indicated that they were in favour of the proposed purchase. 121 of these came from the main target area above and around 80% of the locals had taken walks in the existing woodland. Many of the replies had added comments and these are listed in full in the report. Comments were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the past work by FLCW and about the plans for the future.

The report on the consultation exercise is available as a separate document.

## FLCW Management Proposals for the new section

For management purposes, FLCW plans to divide the FC block into 7 zones. The aerial map shows the approximate boundaries of zones 2, 4 and 6. The proposed management for the zones will be considered going from north-east to south-west.



Zone 1) Unplanted area close to lay-by. It is proposed to plant a few bog woodland species on the southern edge.

Zone 2) Rest of area east of the railway line. This is wet and has a lot of wind blown timber. There is a burn that runs due east half way along the railway line section. This provides the main drainage from the community woodland as well as some drainage for the FC block. FLCW wish this to remain open to prevent water-logging of the main site. It is proposed to leave this woodland as it is with the possible exception of the creation of a path along the east side.

Zone 3) Railway line and its margins. This has a number of shrubs and deciduous tree species which should be retained. There are a few fallen conifers on the west side which will need to be trimmed to allow access along the railway line. A few standing conifers would be felled to open views to the west, but the rest would be retained.

Zone 4) Unplanted section west of the railway line. This zone is species rich with typical bog vegetation such as sphagnum moss and bog asphodel. This is a known site for a priority butterfly species, the Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*). Care should be taken to avoid damage to this site. The land here is damp and relatively flat so minimal ditch and drain blocking should be sufficient.

There are drainage channels along the edges of this section which feed into the burn in zone 3. The ditches which cross this zone feed into the drainage channels. It is proposed that the ends of these ditches should be blocked to maintain a high water table. These ditches should not be actively filled in (e.g. by heavy machinery) to avoid damage to the near-pristine bog vegetation.

Zone 5) Conifers on peat deeper than roughly 350cm. This zone is about 3.8 hectares, 40% of the area of the whole block. There is some wind blow damage along the western edge of the zone. The remaining trees should be felled. Some timber should be of commercial value so could be removed from the site and sold to offset some of the costs of the felling and bog restoration. The rest can be used to level some of the ditches as suggested by Tweed Forum or can be converted into chippings. Chippings are useful for path creation and maintenance either here or on the rest of the community woodland.

The line of the boundary fence along the south east edge of this zone could be used to define a path that would link the southern end of zone 3 with zone 6.

Zone 6) Conifers on peat shallower than roughly 350cm. These would be retained and would act as a partial screen of the chicken farm sheds. There is some interest amongst foresters in retaining a few of the experimental plots; this is because of their historical importance.

A walk would be created through this section. Existing rides on the northern edge of this zone could form the basis for such a path.

Zone 7) Small open area along the southern edge of the block. It is proposed to plant some bog woodland species here. In the long term, these could provide a replacement screen.

Summary: These proposals aim to retain some of the woodland for community use while protecting the deeper peat levels from damage through dessication. They will also open views to the south and east which will enhance the existing community woodland. Ultimately it is expected that about 60% of the extension will be open ground and the remaining 40% will have tree cover.

## Community Benefits

The existing community woodland is run by members of the local communities for the benefit of these communities and for those from further afield. Access is open to all. Some seating has been provided to make access easier for those whose walking ability is limited.

FLCW has made a priority of the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. The community consultation has made it clear that visitors greatly appreciate this. The site is well used by walkers and especially by those exercising dogs. There are at least five commercial dog walking groups that visit the site. The ponds have already become an important breeding site for dragonflies and damselflies.

The woodland is a useful educational resource. For example:

- FLCW has encouraged use of the site by local schools. Two primary schools have visited the site along with teachers and some parents.
- FLCW has also been involved with a couple of Duke of Edinburgh Award projects.
- A lecturer from Edinburgh University has made use of the site in his teaching.
- The ROWAN project at the Orchard Centre in Bonnyrigg have used the site in a training course.
- Borders Forest Trust have visited a number of times with groups who are learning techniques of forest management.
- FLCW has hosted a brush cutter training course.
- FLCW has hosted a moth night, open to all.

A lot of the development work on the site has been carried out by volunteers so has had little commercial impact. Contractors have been used for larger projects such as pond creation and clearing drainage ditches beside the old railway lines.

The principal benefit of the proposed extension is to enhance the existing site, thus expanding the range of activities that are supported. There will be enhancements to the natural environment with improved views of the Moorfoot hills both from the extension and from the existing woodland. Thus the amenity value of the community woodland will increase and the greater diversity will improve the site for educational purposes.

There will be additional paths for community use which will increase the variety of walks that are available. The path network on the existing woodland covers a total of about 2700 metres. The plan for the extension is expected to add a further 1400 metres.

The existing small area of bog (zone 4) is a known site for a priority butterfly species, the Large Heath. Extending the area of bog should improve the site for this species. The plan is to increase the bog area from approximately 1.1 hectares to 4.9 hectares.

There will be some direct economic impact of buying the extension. The plans to fell part of the FC block and restore it to bog will require paid work by a suitable contractor. It is anticipated that the cost of the work will be of the order of £15,200. Other direct financial costs are likely to be small, involving signage, paths and improved drainage. There should also be some harvested timber and a local company has expressed an interest in buying some for its own business use.

The planned bog restoration will be done in a different way from that which was used in 2009. The success of different methods of restoration is of current research interest, so comparison of the evolution of the flora on the two sections should be of conservation interest. This work can be

considered as part of the wider programme to control water flows along Eddleston Water and into the Tweed.

## Financial Plan

The projections below take the financial year as ending in November and give figures rounded up (expenditure) or down (income) to the nearest £50. This implies that the purchase will be taken as occurring in year one and the main development expenses for the extension site will take place in year two. Estimates are given for current annual expenditure by FLCW.

FLCW has known since 2014 that there were plans to sell the FC block. Several larger items of expenditure have been deferred to improve the chances of being able to buy the land; for example, replacing the roof of the main building (c. £2,500). It is planned that work such as this will be carried out when finances permit. Deferred projects have not been included in the tables below.

The main income for the community woodland comes from selling Christmas trees in December. This is weather dependent, with takings in recent years ranging from £2,500 to £3,600. The subsequent balance calculations have used a conservative figure of £2,700 per year. An additional £200 per year is obtained from membership fees.

The annual expenditure varies quite a bit from year to year. Accounts for recent years suggest an average figure of around £1,400 per annum for running expenses for the original site. These expenses include:

- Membership of relevant societies.
- Insurance.
- Clearing of drainage ditches beside the railway lines.
- Strimming of edges of paths.
- Tree planting (largely completed).
- Replacing broken tree stakes.
- Replacing damaged or lost tools (e.g. loppers, saws).
- Materials for paths (e.g. half sleepers, type ones).
- Insertions in local newspapers.
- Costs of holding AGMs.

The extra land might lead to an increase in insurance costs, but is not likely to lead to any other major changes to FLCW costs.

The summary figures above imply that FLCW has been generating a surplus of income over essential expenditure. This has allowed funding of additional work that was considered to be desirable, such as extensions of the path network.

The independent valuation of the FC block was £36,000. At the end of July 2017, FLCW held a balance of £19,850. Thus FLCW is unable to buy the land without a substantial contribution from a body such as the Scottish Land Fund. The figures below indicate that a grant of 90% of the initial project costs would allow the purchase to go ahead and allow FLCW to carry out significant site development work over subsequent years.



The first table gives estimates of costs for the first 5 years of the purchase and subsequent development of the Leadburn extension. Most figures are given to the nearest multiple of £100.

<b>Extension Year 1</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Total</b>
Site Valuation		£700	
Printing Leaflets		£300	
Purchase price		£36,000	
Legal costs		£5,000	
Zone 1 - Welcome sign		£400	
Zone 7 - Welcome sign		£400	£42,800
90% Scottish Land Fund grant	£38,500		
<b>Extension Year 2</b>			
Zone 1 - New drainage ditch		£150	
Zone 3 - Clearing fallen trees		£100	
Zone 5 - Felling Licence		£250	
Zone 5 - Felling and levelling 3.8ha @ £4,000 per hectare		£15,200	£15,700
<b>Extension Year 3</b>			
Zone 1 - Tree planting		£150	
Zone 1 - Raised bog information		£400	
Zone 5 - Clearing of regeneration		£200	
Zone 5 - Path creation		£200	
Zone 6 - Path creation		£300	
Zone 7 - Tree planting		£400	£1,650
<b>Extension Year 4-5</b>			
General site maintenance		£200	
Zone 5 - Clearing of regeneration		£200	

The likely costs of the felling and surface smoothing work in zone 5 are unclear. Tweed Forum suggests that costs are likely to be in the range of £2,000 to £5,000 per hectare. The figures in the table have used £4,000 per hectare.

It is possible that grant money might be available for this work and that some of the felled timber might be of commercial value. Either of these would reduce the overall cost. If no grant money is obtained and if the costs are much greater than expected, then FLCW might need to consider reducing the size of the felled area.

The second table gives the estimated totals costs for the first five years and the estimated balance for FLCW at the end of each November

	<b>Income</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Cash at 31 July 2017			£19,850
<b>Year 1 Summary</b>			
Community Woodland	£3,650	£1,400	
Leadburn Extension	£38,500	£42,800	
Estimated final balance			£17,800
<b>Year 2 Summary</b>			
Community Woodland	£2,900	£1,400	
Leadburn Extension		£15,700	
Estimated final balance			£3,600
<b>Year 3 Summary</b>			
Community Woodland	£2,900	£1,400	
Leadburn Extension		£1,650	
Estimated final balance			£3,450
<b>Year 4 Summary</b>			
Community Woodland	£2,900	£1,400	
Leadburn Extension		£400	
Estimated final balance			£4,550
<b>Year 5 Summary</b>			
Community Woodland	£2,900	£1,400	
Leadburn Extension		£400	
Estimated final balance			£5,650

The financial projection suggests that the FLCW plans are viable as long as a grant is obtained from the Scottish Land Fund to cover a substantial part of the costs of buying the land. The capital position at present means that there is a measure of safety in the estimated year end balances. Thus FLCW should be able to deal with any unanticipated extra costs.

If the actual costs are no worse than expected, FLCW should be able to start some of the deferred work programmes during year 2.

## Ability to Complete Project

FLCW has managed the community woodland of 44 hectares for 11 years. Most of the work on this site has been carried out by volunteer labour. FLCW has sometimes had assistance with larger projects such as tree planting, but most of the work and subsequent maintenance has been carried out by its own volunteers. Volunteers have also spent many days every year on the management of the site and on the removal of conifer regeneration.

The site includes an area of 17 hectares on which work was started in 2009 to restore it to a raised bog. Tree removal is essential here, so volunteers have spent at least 15 man-days on this work every year since then. FLCW has often had help from groups such as Lothians Conservation Volunteers on the raised bog.

Finance for a lot of the work has come from grant applications, so FLCW has some experience in carrying out the requirements of funding bodies. Some of this work has involved the use of outside contractors. Examples of work arising from grants:

- Original site purchase – Scottish Land Fund.
- Original site purchase – European Community Scottish Borders Leader+.
- Raised bog restoration – Scottish Natural Heritage.
- Path improvements and finger posts – Awards for All.
- Pond creation – WREN (Scottish Landfill Communities Fund).
- Path maintenance on the railway lines – Land Manager Options.
- Tree Planting – Various bodies.

In addition, FLCW raises funds by selling conifer regeneration as Christmas trees during December. In both of the last two years FLCW has raised more than £3000. This allows FLCW to meet any additional management expenses.

More information about the work of FLCW is available on the web site:  
<http://onlineborders.org.uk/community/leadburnwood>

FLCW should have sufficient experience and finance to complete these proposals.

## SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Which means that:</b>
11 years experience of managing site	FLCW members have the skills to carry out most of our maintenance activities.
Support by other groups (Borders Forest Trust, Lothians Conservation Volunteers, Tweed Forum)	Advice and assistance is available to FLCW.
Christmas tree sales	FLCW has a regular income source.

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Which means that:</b>
Largely depend on a few volunteers	There could be problems if volunteers drop out.
Lack some skills and equipment	FLCW needs to buy in work such as ditch widening

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Which means that:</b>
Apply for grant from Peatland Action	Costs of bog restoration would be covered.
Felled timber should be of commercial value	Planned but deferred work on the original site can go ahead.
Could buy in some assistance with maintenance	FLCW would depend less on our volunteers.
Woodland and bog are an educational resource	FLCW will continue to encourage schools and other groups to use the site.

<b>Threats</b>	<b>Which means that:</b>
Bog restoration quotes could exceed budget	FLCW might need to reduce size of felled area.
Fly tipping	FLCW has had to take measures against this.
Thefts	FLCW volunteers store materials off site as far as possible.
Glenrath Farms	The farm owner has tried to obstruct work by FLCW in the past.

## Acknowledgements and References

Aerial photograph. Google Maps (<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/>).

Anderson (2013). Report on Leadburn Block. Internal Forestry Commission report.

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland (2018). Purchase of Forestry Block at Leadburn – FLCW Community Support. (Unpublished).