

Purchase of Forestry Block at Leadburn – FLCW Community Support

Introduction

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland (FLCW: Scottish Charity SC037052) own 44 hectares at Leadburn. They have applied to buy an additional 9.35 hectares from the Forestry Commission under the CATS scheme. This report summarises the results of work to establish community support for this purchase.

The FLCW Certificate of Incorporation defines our 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. Our web site has always used a rather narrower definition as the rural communities associated with Eddleston, Howgate and Lamancha.

We have concentrated our efforts on this smaller area together with West Linton. This comprises four Data Zones as defined by statistics.gov.uk. These are Eddleston, Rural South Midlothian, West Linton Lower and West Linton Upper. In 2016 these areas contained 1444 households.

Methods

Two main methods were used to ascertain support; leaflets and online surveys. The leaflets included a section for completion and a link to our online surveys. The online surveys were also publicised through a page on our web site and through a new Facebook page. We placed adverts in the Peebleshire News and the Penicuik Town Crier. We manned stalls at the Tweed Valley Forest Festival and at various local markets. Leaflets were also available at various public locations in the area.

Over 1300 leaflets were distributed to homes within our rural communities. Thus we believe that we have covered more than 90% of our target audience.

The information collected included surname, post code and the name of the nearest village or town. This allowed us to subdivide the results into three groups; local community, outer community and those outside of our three post codes. Our sampling unit was taken to be a household, so care was taken to remove multiple records from the same location. We also asked for information on the size of each household, so that we could estimate the total number of supporters.

The leaflets and surveys also asked for “any comments you would like to add about this proposal or the work of FLCW”. This was optional.

Results

All of the 228 respondents indicated that they were in favour of our proposed purchase. Of these, 121 were from the inner area, 64 from the outer area and 43 were outside of the three post codes that define our area. The average number of people per household in the inner area was 2.78 which gives an estimate of at least 336 supporters in our nearby rural communities.

Many of the respondents made use of the option to comment on either the proposal or on the work of FLCW. All of these comments are given in the Appendices. About 80% of respondents from the inner area had taken walks in the existing woodland and this is reflected in the many positive comments about the work of FLCW. There appears to be enthusiastic support for the FLCW proposal from a significant proportion of the local population.

Appendix 1 – Comments from local community

- This is a great initiative, well led by people in the community and providing space for recreation and local activities.
- I support what they do, and feel guilty that I haven't yet walked there. I am very lucky to be surrounded by great walks that I don't need to drive to, which is important to me. I think the purchase of the extra (ex-FC) land would be a great asset, and would allow the FLCW more scope for community based amenities and activities. It could also enhance landscape aspects by creating a whole unit for management, with perhaps more wildlife benefits.
- This would be a great extension to local amenity.
- Enjoy walking my dogs in Leadburn Wood.
- Great work done.
- We go walking in the Wood quite often and love the increasing biodiversity. Expanding on this can only be a good thing.
- Nice to see new paths going in for walking groups.
- Keep up the good work!
- Careful management of this key woodland area in full view of the Pentlands is essential. This group has done an excellent job over many years and deserves the fullest support.
- More walks, more open space to be free and explore nature can only be a good thing. I hope this happens.
- Great idea!
- I would like to see the land being used by the community rather than in private hands
- This is a wonderful resource. It would be lovely to see it extended.
- I would be interested in being involved in the project.
- Any project which aids wildlife and maintenance of forestry and also provides the opportunity for interested people to appreciate the countryside is a good scheme and should be supported and applauded.
- Great.
- FLCW do a great job and we should support their hard work and enthusiasm.
- Lovely to walk my dog in the community woodland.
- Thanks for making the effort to provide this community resource.
- The planned purchase of the FC land (to allow an increase in the diversity of the walks in the area) will significantly increase the amenity of the woodland to the community.
- The existing paths are well used by families, individual exercisers and nature lovers and dog walkers. An extended path network would be greatly appreciated.
- Enjoy the walks there with my dog. Be great to have an even bigger variety of land to walk around. Heathland is great for a cocker spaniel.
- Very much in favour of the work, and the proposal to extend. Would contribute if asked.
- Excellent plan and also perhaps the old railway line could be opened up a bit on the Peebles side. We walk the dog a lot at Leadburn Forest. Opening up the view would be wonderful.
- We frequently use the area for walking, especially with our dog. We would be delighted to see the available area increase in size.
- Great idea to have land publicly owned and local use encouraged.
- Very supportive of the plan and would use the forest more with increased variety of walks.
- More publicity on existing woodland would be useful.
- This is a great local resource that is used by many people, to see it expand would be fantastic.
- Superb work done by volunteers for the benefit of the local community - a great and worthwhile endeavour.
- I think the group of volunteers do a marvellous job.
- It's such a lovely area to walk and so well maintained. It would be great to have this extended as we use the area on a daily basis.
- Sounds fantastic.

- This is a wonderful place to visit. The views are outstanding. It's a great attribute to the area.
- A very good cause - old and young will benefit.
- This is a wonderful amenity that is superbly looked after for the use of local people.
- Further paths? Is there any option for gaining funding from the new wind farm proposal for Cloich?
- It's a great community organisation supporting nature and the local community.
- The FLCW organise and perform important work in our area, from managing indigenous species of trees to maintaining much loved local walk areas. It would be wonderful if we could extend the area and widen the benefits of FLCW to new areas of land.
- Sound like a nice idea.
- I fully support the FLCW in their bid to purchase additional land at Leadburn. At present this bit of woodland has little amenity value and it would be great to have it opened up for public access.
- I am fairly new to the area and didn't know about this amenity. Now that I do, I plan to visit. It sounds like a great project. I may even volunteer.
- Impressive work so far. Lovely place to walk and see the seasons. An easier access from the Leadburn end would be useful.
- The woodland management is already great so would welcome them buying more and making it even better.
- I am very impressed by the work already completed. It is a joy to walk there. My grandson, 4 years at the time on a lovely day, memorably said if only we could have our house here as he enjoyed the view!
- I fully support this proposal.
- It would be great to see this project expanded and the land protected and well managed for the community, wildlife and future generations.
- We only moved to West Linton in July but plan on buying our tree from Leadburn Wood.
- Great work by Leadburn Community Woodland.
- The planning and drive of FLCW is commendable, I only wish I was fitter and more able to participate.
- FLCW are doing great work improving the woodland site and should be supported in any way possible.
- Good 'track record' for the original LCW. Every little purchase helps restore our woodlands. Don't discourage these fine volunteers.
- Sell them more land! Plant 50 million trees now!
- Cleaner environment for the community - an asset for future for all - we need many more examples of this!
- Great community resource.
- Good idea - good luck!
- Fantastic idea.
- I fully support their valuable efforts to maintain and restore this land for community use and wildlife habitats.
- Community woodlands are a great idea and we need more of them to increase habitats and diversity.
- FLCW are providing a valuable reserve and conservation service. We must support their good work.
- Good work. Keep it up.
- The original woodland is a pleasure to walk in and I appreciate the work already done in creating pathways and maintenance.
- Good luck.
- Leadburn Community Woodland is an invaluable asset to the community. Very visible to commuters, locals and tourists. Fantastic if can be expanded.
- The extra land would be a welcome addition to LCW.

Appendix 2 – Comments from outer community

- It's an excellent idea to extend the woodland through this purchase and to restore native tree species. I have often seen the sign for the woodland but I did not realise that it was open to the public until I read the recent Town Crier article. I'm a competent photographer and would be happy to take any number of high resolution photos that you may want for any purpose in connection with the woodland. In the past I've done similar for a friend who owns Blinkbonny Wood in East Lothian. I hope that the application is successful.
- Go to it!
- To increase the size and diversity of this woodland will be of significant benefit to the local communities as well as those who visit from further afield.
- It is a wonderful place to walk at all times of the year and there is lots of interesting wildlife, plants and views to enjoy. Hopefully FLCW can add to their current land and enhance the site further. Must try and get involved with FLCW next year!
- It's a logical purchase and, as a general supporter of rewilding, the FLCW has my enthusiastic support. I won't be buying a tree this year because we're away, but will donate the amount I would have paid.
- It would add to the success of the current site.
- I support the group's aims in increasing biodiversity in the woodland area and providing an area for active recreation.
- Expanding a site for wildlife is always a good idea.
- The current area is a great community asset. Extending it, and making the habitat more natural is a further positive move.
- I run the birds and plants group for Tweeddale University of the Third age and we have visited Leadburn Community Woodland several times. It is wonderful to see the increasing variety of flora and fauna.
- I continue to be impressed by the commitment of FLCW members and Friends in maintaining their current site. The preserving of land for its natural value in flora and fauna is crucial in today's world, and I am privileged to be part of that. Extending the land in its FLCW's ownership will help that initiative.
- More community Forests and woodlands are needed to support the wellbeing of people and wildlife.
- This will build on the already good work and provide safe walks for families.
- Hope to visit Leadburnwood in near future.
- It is an important initiative involving restoration of peat bogs and maintaining the biodiversity e.g. Large Heath BAP priority. The additional purchase would be vital for protecting the Large Heath colony.
- Excellent idea. Well done to the people doing it.
- The woodland at Leadburn has been transformed for the better - very impressive.
- Fantastic proposal, adding to fantastic work already done!
- Keep up the good work!
- A good initiative.
- This is an important site. The extension would be very managed by the Leadburn Community Woodland group.
- A project like this which encourages people to enjoy and make use of woodland deserves support. A great community resource.
- Great opportunity to expand Large Heath habitat (butterfly). Rewetting and clearing of trees from deep peat.
- Beautiful woodland - well maintained - more would be fantastic!
- Will be a very worthwhile project and a big asset to the area and its users.
- We very much appreciate the work you do and enjoy regular walks with our dog at Leadburn. Thank you.

Appendix 3 – Comments from outside of our community

- I wish to express my admiration and support for the time and effort of FLCW.
- Lovely spot with great potential. One of few wetland reserves in the area so really needs long term support . Always get my xmas tree as a very sustainable local source using plantation regrowth.
- We support the aims of community woodlands, for leisure, education & environmental purposes, and believe these areas should be extended in general terms.
- Fully support the development of new walks and other facilities for the local community and other visitors.
- I love this area, having just discovered it! So does my dog, it is fairly safe, away from the road, it is wild and beautiful with big mossy trees and all the gorgeous boggy plants, we feel so at home here, more more!
- The campaign about this proposal has increased my awareness of leadburn wood. Had not previously known that there were paths for walks. Did not think it was a large enough area. Increasing this and returning native woodland etc. would obviously be beneficial.
- It is great to have this area close to our house. We love to walk around and select our Christmas tree, makes it a real family occasion. It is obvious that a lot of hard work and effort goes in to maintaining and planting.
- No, only that I very much enjoy walking in the community woodland and support you in your endeavour to enlarge it.
- This is magic!
- Hopefully you get all required.
- Well done for being so organised.
- Good luck!
- I confirm my strong support for the FLCW.
- Always happy to help and support initiatives that are respectful of nature.
- Excellent work. A cause we should all stand behind and support.
- This is an important environmental bonus to the local and wider communities.
- Excellent, nice place to walk, explore.
- Hope the purchase is successful!

Appendix 4 – Unsolicited Facebook comments

- We live in Edinburgh and all our green spaces are being built on! I support this community woodland. It makes my heart sing to be in this wild beautiful place with my dog! Love the water the rushes mosses and trees. More more more!
- This is a great local amenity - with thanks to all the volunteers and funders who have helped to provide this in our area.
- A lovely local woodland, ample parking and walks with great views North West towards Edinburgh and across the valley to the Pentlands.
- Beautiful place with fantastic views all year round!!
- Sounds like a fantastic opportunity not to be missed! Hope it works out.