

Scottish Land Fund
Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba

Easter Breich Wood Community Group

SC051201



Annual report 2022-23

About us

Our community group became a charity in August 2021. Our aims are:

- To secure Easter Breich Wood for the benefit of the community. (i.e Seafield, Polbeth, West Calder and Harburn).
- To maintain and improve the woodland in order to advance environmental protection and community health and development
- To involve the community and work with partners.

Thanks to funding from the Scottish Land Fund we bought Easter Breich on behalf of the community in March 2022.



Working with partners

To help us get established, the Scottish Land Fund grant included funds for [West Calder and Harburn Development Trust](#) to work with us for a year from March 2022. They've helped organise a maintenance day, found us training on tree inspection, arranged for the community noticeboard and been a helpful source of advice throughout the year.

Although the formal partnership finished in May, we continue to work jointly with them and Polbeth Community Woods and Gardens. We had a stall at their garden open day in July and they have hosted a web page.



This year we joined the citizen science project, [Guardians of our Rivers](#), which sets out to monitor the abundance of different groups of invertebrates that live in the riverbed. The presence of these organisms acts as biological indicators of water quality and can provide an early warning of pollution events or detrimental changes in our rivers.

Buglife, the invertebrate conservation charity, provided us with free training and all the equipment needed to carry out the surveys. This was delivered by Rebecca Lewis, their conservation officer, who trained us on-site at the Breich Water river. Our group of volunteers then became a team of 6 fully certified surveyors!

We have also received funding from Accenture to join the FreshWater Watch project for a year! This is a global citizen science project developed by the environmental charity Earthwatch Europe.

The project enables us to monitor the levels of nitrates and phosphates in our rivers and pond using simple chemical tests. These compounds can indicate pollution coming from wastewater treatment plants, industry or from agricultural practices.

We've also made links with Scottish Community Climate Action Network, and have used their 'SCCAN Spaces' to host our new website at: <https://sccan.scot/easterbreichwood/>



Thanks to funding from the Scottish Land Fund, we were able to buy mammal tunnels. These are a fun way to see if there's any small mammals in the woodland.



The cardboard 'tunnels' are set with 'bait' to encourage small mammals to walk over the inky paper and leave their footprints. We wrote out to all the local schools and both Parkhead and St Mary's took up the offer.

We hope to involve more schools next year.



We have supported the Lyme Resource Centre Charity <https://www.lymeresourcecentre.com> by installing ticks and Lyme Disease awareness signs at the entrances to the woodland. The signs give advice on how to prevent tick bites and how to check for ticks following your visit.

Looking at nature....

We're trying to understand what wildlife and plants we have in the woodland – so that we can understand how to protect them. We've taken part in national wildlife monitoring and worked with schools.



In January we did the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch.

Committee members did a water vole survey in the spring. No sign of water vole, but we do have otters. We also surveyed for dragonfly and damselfly – and over the summer have found two species of dragonfly, and several species of damselfly. and dragonfly and damselfly survey over the summer.

In August we took part in the 'Big Butterfly Count'.

The results of all our surveys were uploaded to national records.

In May, the [Lothian Amphibian and Reptile Group](#) did a pond survey, looking for newts. We didn't find any newts, but we'll repeat the survey again next year on a bigger scale.

In March, Edinburgh and Lothian Fungi Enthusiasts Group visited the woodland, finding over 50 species of fungi.

Committee member Grant, led a nature photography event in the spring. Despite the weather saw plenty of bird life including a woodpecker and swifts.



Path and woodland maintenance

We hold regular volunteer maintenance events during the year. After the winter floods we cleared a lot of rubbish from the Breich Water and river bank that had got trapped on its way downstream. In May a group helped cut back a tree that was overhanging the path and in July there was some major cutting back of vegetation alongside the paths. Thank you to everyone who helped out.



We'd also like to thank West Lothian Council for repairing the small bridge by the pond and Gordon Clarke for all the work he's done through the year cutting a new drainage channel and cutting the roadside hedge.

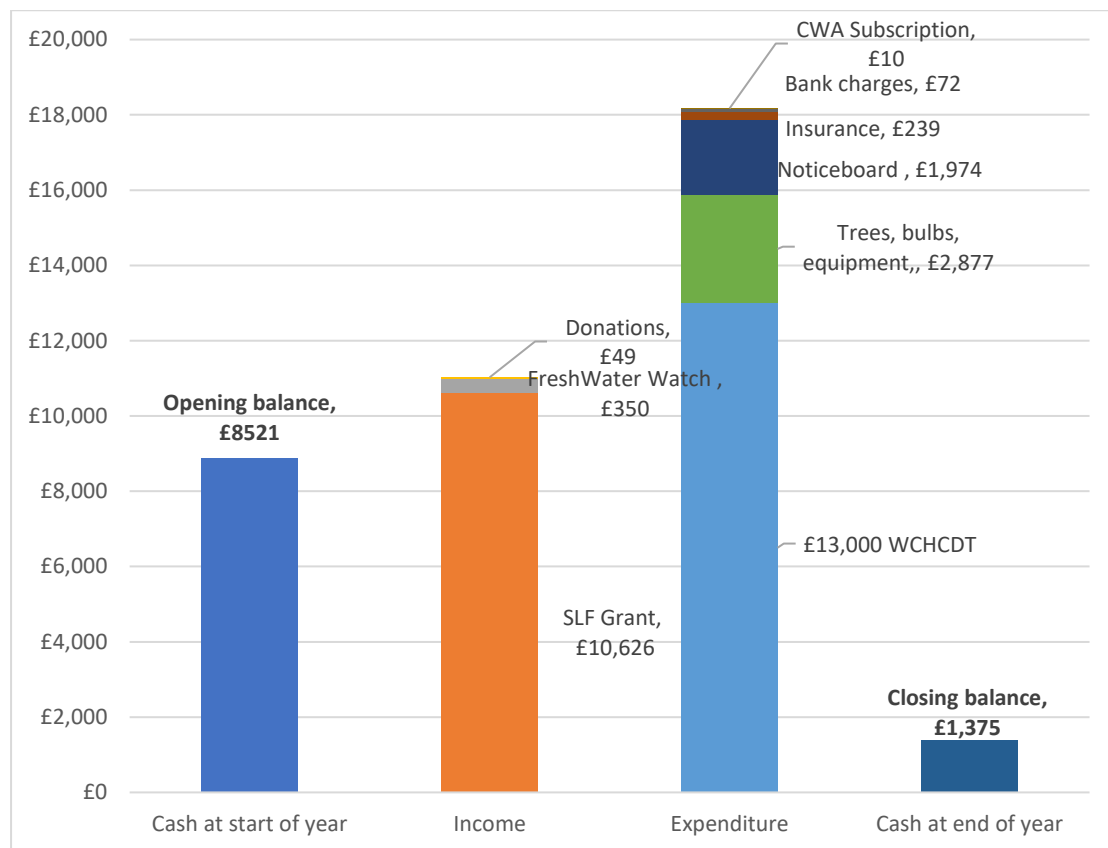


This spring we planted 5,000 snowdrops and 2,000 bluebells. We're looking forward to seeing them next spring and hopefully they'll multiply as the years go on. We also planted some fruit trees – plum and apple. They'll take a few years to get established, but they're off to a good start.

In July we installed our community noticeboard, again funded through the Scottish Land Fund and designed with the assistance of West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust. It's a great way to advertise events and we've been pinning up a list of animals and plants 'spotted in the wood' each month.



Summary of Accounts



Our Scottish Land Fund grant finished this year, and we paid [West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust](#) £13,000 to establish our way of working in our first year. That grant also paid for a Community Noticeboard, bulbs, fruit trees and a range of equipment to help with path and woodland maintenance. Our involvement with Fresh Water Watch yielded a £350 grant to spend on equipment.

Thank you to Margaret Boyack, Edinburgh College for reviewing our accounts for our annual return to OSCR.

Reserves Policy

We manage Easter Breich Wood on behalf of the community, including encouraging community access by maintaining paths. A certain level of reserves is needed in case of unexpected, urgent path repairs or urgent tree removal along the roadside boundary.

This year we are putting £250 toward reserves.

This is reviewed annually in the light of costs actually incurred. Regular path maintenance and an annual tree condition survey will reduce the risk of unexpected urgent work being required. We are working on a schedule for planned works and sourcing the funding required for them.

Our Trustees

- Camilla Kidner, Chair
- Heather McClafferty, Treasurer
- Niamh Coyne, Secretary
- Rhoda Lawton
- Grant Knight
- Norman Lannigan



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