

Scottish Land Fund  
Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba

# **Easter Breich Wood Community Group**

SC051201



**Annual report 2023-24**

# 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.



## Woodland maintenance

We hold regular volunteer maintenance events during the year. This year we set up two new regular groups. In March, thanks to funding from West Lothian Climate Action Network five people were trained in using scythes by expert scyther, Steve Tomlin and get 3 members fully first aid trained.

From May to September we've met weekly to scythe the path edges and bridle paths.



We've also had a fantastic bunch of volunteers from West Lothian Council's Pathways project who have helped with raking up and cutting back overgrown hedges.

Other seasonal work has included, hedge trimming along the path, clearing blackthorn scrub, 'unflytipping' some tyres and removing dead branches from roadside trees.

In July, thanks to a donation from Craigshill Community Garden and the Conservation Volunteers Trust we planted around 70 mixed species tree saplings in the wood. We look forward to seeing them grow in years to come.

The WLCAN funding also allowed us to install cycle racks at the entrance and a bench with a great view of the five sisters.

Thanks to Paths for All we bought a mower which got its first outing in July and has really helped keep the verges in check. That funding also paid for chainsaw training which means we'll be able to clear any small trees that fall onto the path during the winter.



On Easter Sunday, Lothian Conservation Volunteers put in a hard day's work scraping back the paths and moving large stones from the 'ride'.



**A huge thank you to everyone who has helped out during the year.** In October we celebrated everyone's efforts, holding a cake stall as part of the Community Land Festival, organised through Community Land Scotland.



## Looking at nature

We've continued this year to take part in national wildlife monitoring and citizen science projects.

We did the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch in January and the Big Butterfly Count in July. The results were uploaded to national records.



We also continued monthly monitoring of river water quality through our involvement in Freshwater Watch and the Guardians of Our River Project. We now have a full year of data for both projects which gives us a really useful baseline for spotting any changes in water quality.

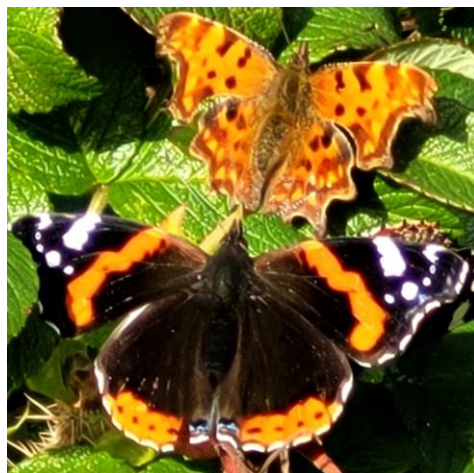
Committee member Grant led a nature photography event in May and in October, fungi expert, Chris Knowles, led a fungi foray through the woods.



## Help and advice

Over the year we have had the benefit of professional advice from a range of organisations and projects which have really helped us learn how to manage the woodland.

In April, West Lothian Council Rangers, Luke, Tracey and Bronwen advised us on path maintenance and how to run public volunteering events. We also got very helpful advice from the West Lothian Council biodiversity officers, Becky Plunkett and Hannah Crow and Easter Breich Wood gets a mention in the new [West Lothian 10 year Biodiversity Action Plan](#).



One of our committee members attended path maintenance training at [Paths for All demonstration site](#) at Oatridge College and has made links with 'Keep Scotland Beautiful' this year.

Through the Community Woodland Association's mentoring project we have had the benefit of the expertise of a professional forester. He has helped us with some complex funding applications and advised us on the different approaches to managing the woodland.

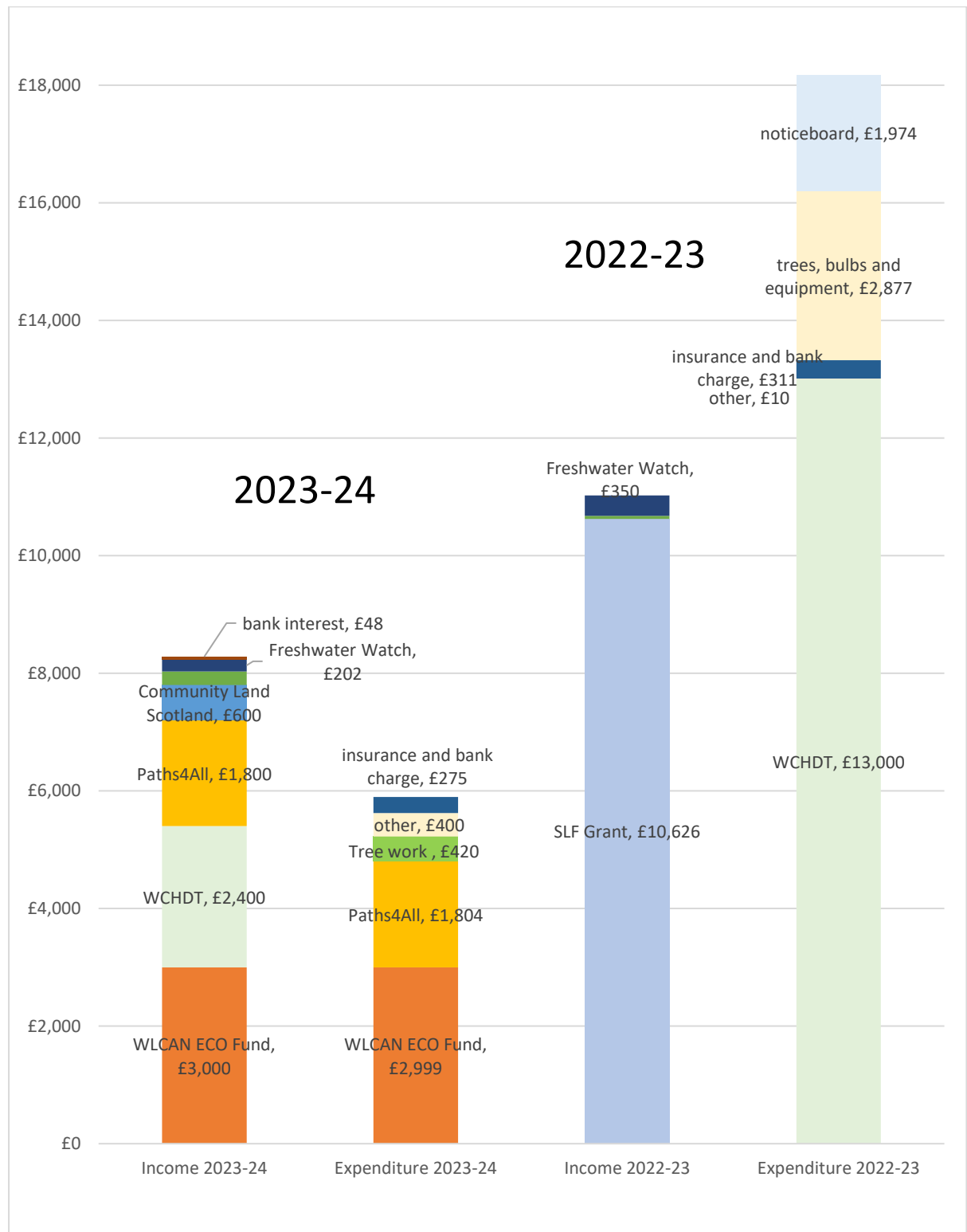


Thanks to the Forth Rivers Trust, two committee members have been trained in controlling Japanese Knotweed and supplied with the kit required. Unfortunately knotweed is endemic along the Breich Water, but this project means we can do our bit to control it.

Thank you to the Scottish Climate Action Network for continuing to host our website and saving us some technical headaches.

And thank you to Polbeth Community Woods and Gardens for lending us garden tools, a gazebo for our cake stall and providing our AGM venue.

# Summary of Accounts



Our main funding this year was from West Lothian Climate Action Network (WLCAN) who provided £3,000 for the scything project, bench, cycle racks and garden tools through their ECO fund. We also received a donation of £2,400 from West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust (WCHDT) . Paths for All provided £1,800 for a mower, chainsaw, chainsaw training and PPE and Community Land Scotland provided a £300 bursary for the Community Land Festival in both 2023 and 2024.

Compared to last year, we have more diverse sources of income and lower expenditure due to our Scottish Land Fund funded arrangement with WCHDT having ended.

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.



## Our Trustees

- Camilla Kidner, Chair
- Heather McClafferty, Treasurer
- Tina Crookston, Secretary
- Rhoda Lawton
- Grant Knight
- Norman Lannigan



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