**Penney’s Community Woodland**

**Chairperson’s Report April 2025**

It has been a particularly busy year at Penney’s Community Woodland: with routine tasks maintaining the woodland; commitments such as erecting stalls at the Kinross markets and participation in the Fossoway Gathering; embarking on new projects such as the Penney’s Wood orchard plot and the drystone dyke rebuild: and the recent installation of nesting boxes. All our activities are reflected by photos and information on our website.

As part of Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, Crook of Devon has been awarded Biodiversity Village status. Penney’s Wood contributed to earning this recognition and as a result was offered 25 nesting boxes for birds and bats, and Hogilos for hedgehogs from PKC Biodiversity Initiative Project. Almost all are now safely installed thanks to the efforts of our team (and without any ladder training).

Penney’s Community Woodland is also on the PKC Nature Network map which is being created with the aim of linking pockets rich in flora and fauna to enable the spread of species such as red squirrel, hedgehog, moth and butterfly.

The trees themselves are mostly thriving, though the routine tasks of the Spring work party were postponed until Autumn due to our other commitments. Some pruning, coppicing and possibly thinning is planned. Damage by rabbits and deer is much in evidence and will be monitored. Wild cherry saplings have been donated but will need to be grown on for a year or two before being distributed around the village, including the woodland.

The grass paths are well maintained by our mowing team and strimmers, and a new path has been created to allow access to the congested area to the south west where several trees (mostly pines) have failed and replanting has been necessary. Paths have been greatly enhanced by the spreading of woodchips on muddy or uneven areas. The woodchip has been donated by Rick and is very much appreciated. Also welcomed is the application of hardcore outside the main gate. These changes make access easier and more pleasant for all, especially as the woodland becomes more popular and the footfall heavier. Strimming has been necessary to reduce the vigour of willowherb, thistle, nettle and wild raspberry which were becoming invasive in places. A team for strimming will be formed for the control of these species and to help manage plant growth in Penney’s Wood plot. An application has been made to Fossoway Benefit Fund for a dedicated brushcutter strimmer but I’m advised that requests are not currently being processed.

Penney’s Community Woodland obtained legal title at long last to the small plot at the road junction to the scout camp. Subsequently full legal documentation was provided for the woodland itself so our affairs are now in good order. The woodland plot was planted in November 2024 with 8 heritage fruit trees funded by The Tree Council, so it can now be referred to as Penney’s Wood orchard plot. A sign was attached to the gate. Planting Day was a family occasion involving children of all ages, parents and grandparents. The area had been cleared of dense vegetation, a woodchip path laid and now a centre bed has been formed and planted the wild flowers.

The drystone dyke project has been a main focus of activity promoted by Willie. A professional leader, extra stone and a willing band of volunteers had to be sought and organised. Under the direction of Robert Dunlop of the Drystane Drying and Walling Association the project is now well underway and will be completed by our own, now competent, team. The wall at the main entrance had been in a tumbledown state for many years but after restoration will look smart and hopefully endure for at least another 100. A drive for new volunteers was successfully carried out in late summer so hopefully our work teams can gradually incorporate new members for all our various activities.

Finally, Forward Plans have been prepared as a blueprint and working document for guidance now and in the years to come. It is intended to be flexible and should be amended and extended regularly, to reflect the needs and priorities within the woodland and environs as it matures and alters.