**Penney’s Community Woodland**

**Forward Plan 2025**

Penney’s Community Woodland was set up and trees planted in 2014, originally named Fossoway Access and Amenity Project Group. All work is carried out by committee members with additional help from local volunteers. The rationale for a Forward Plan is to provide a blueprint for monitoring and managing the woodland environs and the flora and fauna therein. It is intended to be comprehensive and cover all activities and responsibilities of the Penney’s Wood group. The plan is, of necessity, flexible and should be checked and updated at least every two years to reflect change and differing priorities.

**Trees**

**Management Plan for Trees**

Our core activity is management of the trees.

**Thinning**

Penney’s Wood is now 10 years old and it is time to start thinning out trees to reduce competition for light and nutrients, allowing others to thrive and encouraging plants to grow. Thinning is achieved through coppicing or the selective removal of individual trees. Dead wood on the ground increases the habitat for insects which in turn attracts birds, bats and small mammals.

**Coppicing**

Coppicing willow and hazelwill open up the canopy and promote biodiversity. The willow trees at the southern end of the woodland have already sprouted from the base and are suitable for coppicing. This involves cutting the trees close to the ground during the dormant season October to March. Regrowth is from buds close to the ground forming multi stemmed trees.

Actions:

* Winter/early Spring coppicing of willow and hazel by cutting the main stem close to the ground at an angle to shed rainwater. Willow about every 5 years, hazel 7 years. Select trees which are leaning or crowded.
* Deadwood should be piled around the cut stool to discourage browsing by deer and rabbits, or stacked into dead hedges, or heaped.

**Pruning**

Some of the trees need formative pruning to encourage branches to grow straight. Many branches in Penney’s Wood have not grown straight due to restriction in the tree guards. Branches have also rubbed where they have grown through the centre of the tree. Some branches intrude onto the path. Pruning should be carried out when trees are dormant.

Actions:

* Prune twisted and rubbed branches in early Spring before the trees come into leaf.
* Prune branches overhanging the path where they impede progress.
* Prune apple trees in the woodland in Winter to maintain an open crown, allowing sunlight to ripen the fruit.

**Invasive undergrowth**

There are several areas in the woodland where invasive undergrowth appears to be restricting tree growth, especially along the ditch to the west of the woodland. Scots pine planted here is generally not thriving and should be replaced with species more suited to wet conditions.

Several invasive plants were managed by strimming in 2024 to allow light and air into the trees. This should be done annually to try to reduce vigour and spread. Areas of potentially problematic Wild raspberry, Thistle and Willowherb were charted in 2024 for guidance and future monitoring.

Actions:

* Remove poor spindly trees towards the western ditch and replant.
* Strim to remove excessive weed growth along the western ditch to allow in light and air and provide access to the trees.
* Strim annually to reduce vigour and spread of areas of wild raspberry, thistle and willowherb (after flowering).

**Browsing damage** by rabbits and deer is evident.

Actions:

* Monitor damage by rabbits and deer. Stack deadwood/cut branches around vulnerable stems.

**Penney’s Wood Orchard**

The additional plot at the crossroads was made legally ours in 2024 and planted with 8 fruit trees in November. These were 2 years old and each surrounded by a 1metre square mulch mat, which must be kept weed free. First year blossom should be removed to allow the trees to become established. Thereafter pruning is recommended to cut back vigorous growth and crossing branches.

Actions:

* Keep mulch mats weed free and the surrounding grass short.
* Remove blossoms in the first year.
* Prune apple and pear trees late July/early August and again in winter.
* Prune plum trees in late July/early August only.

A central area within the trees and been strimmed and covered with tarpaulin to suppress weeds. Weed roots have been dug out and this area planted with wild flowers. Rabbits are a problem locally so the area has been surrounded by netting.

**Biodiversity**

Crook of Devon has achieved Biodiversity Village status. Penney’s Community Woodland contributed greatly towards that by providing a wide variety of habitat for various species of flora and fauna. We have hedging and stone dykes; mostly young native trees but some mature specimens; rotting tree trunks, dead hedging and wood piles; open areas under power lines; wild, mown and strimmed areas; bug houses, a bee post and the ditch. Birds, bees, butterflies, moths and toads can be found. Voles, rabbits and roe deer are also present.

Actions:

* Monitor the biodiversity of flora and fauna within both woodland areas.
* Share information via noticeboard and website
* Consider the benefits of creating a scrape pond where field run-off water enters the woodland west of the main gate. Froglife Scotland could provide help and advice.

**Nesting boxes**

Under the banner of PKC Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, Penney’s Wood has been provided with nesting boxes for tits, sparrows, robins, owls, bats and hedgehogs, as well as a bee post and mag post (a magnifier on a post for examining small finds).

Actions:

* Monitor and maintain the nesting boxes and bug houses.

**Paths**

A network of grass paths has been created to provide pleasing walks and allow access to all parts of the woodland. A new strimmed path has enabled access to the west corner north of the ditch, an area that becomes densely overgrown in summer.

The paths are managed by mowing in season, by volunteers on a rota basis, using the ride-on mower. Edges of paths are strimmed as necessary, as are the areas around the benches and boards. Paths become very uneven in winter when the ground softens, stones sometimes become exposed, molehills cause problems, and some path areas become waterlogged and muddy.

Actions:

* Continue mowing grass paths.
* Strim the new path as necessary.
* Remove or spread molehill soil on shallow areas.
* Monitor paths to remove stones to allow safe passage of the mower.
* Apply and re-apply woodchip to muddy or very uneven areas.
* Trim branches overhanging paths where they impede passage

**Bridges**

The central bridge is a large concrete pipe, turfed around and able to be crossed by the mower and pushchairs. Bridges east and west are formed by sleepers joined together and topped with wire mesh for good grip.

Actions:

* Check the condition of the wooden bridges to ensure they are firm and safe. Renew as necessary.
* Check the condition of the wire mesh for wear and tear and renew as necessary.

**Ditch**

A ditch runs from east to west with two right angle bends as it skirts the Wallace’s property. Vegetation along the sides absorbs water and slows the flow. At times of excessive heavy rainfall water overflows freely to the south side. The woodland holds floodwater which helps mitigate flooding further on. The ditch is inspected annually by PKC Flood Team. At times of excessive rain, water also flows into the upper part of the woodland from fields across the road and flows diagonally across paths towards a neighbouring property.

Actions:

* Continue to take advice from PKC Flood Team regarding depth of ditch, steepness of sides, and plant growth. In particular we have been asked to monitor the silt levels (these can be seen from the concrete bridge) as at some point in the future dredging may be necessary in relevant sections.
* At times of flood, close the woodland for safety by putting notices on all gates.

**Boundaries**

The boundaries of Penney’s Community Woodland comprise walling, fencing, hedging, trees and gates. The walls are ancient drystone and in a tumbledown state. Fences are mostly in reasonable order with a renewed section on the south side. Hedging to the north west is well maintained by the owner. Mature conifers on our side of the Wallace boundary encroach on nearby trees but would be very difficult to trim. The rest of the Wallace property is open to the woodland, the ditch being the dividing line to the north. All gates are wooden and in working order. The main access is prone to becoming very muddy outside the gates and is currently topped with a layer of gravel/hardcore which improves matters.

Actions:

* The two steps to the west gate and vulnerable to damage by vehicles and should be monitored and repaired as necessary.
* The main access should be monitored and topped up with hardcore as necessary.
* Wooden gates, supports, hinges and closures shoud be kept in good working order.
* The drystone dyke project is underway to replace a length of walling by the main entrance. Further drystone projects could be considered.

**Signage and Noticeboard**

There are small wooden signs, one on the west gates to the woodland and one to Penney’s Wood Orchard, a large welcome sign on the south side and a locked, glazed noticeboard at the main entrance.

Actions:

* Renew the protective coating on the wooden signs and noticeboard as necessary. Paint the carved wording if necessary to keep it legible.
* Maintain or change the lock on the noticeboard to keep it secure.
* Encourage more use of the noticeboard to be interesting and relevant to users of Penney’s Wood.

**Container hut and Equipment**

A painted metal container houses the ride-on mower, electric strimmer and sundry items relating to care of the machinery and trees. Health and safety regulations are displayed. Willow is planted around the container to provide some screening.

Actions:

* Container rust to be held at bay. Screen planting to be managed by tying in stray stems and pruning.
* Ride-on mower to be cleaned on a regular basis and serviced as advised. New volunteers to be trained before using the mower, and all users to sign that they have read the Health and Safety Regulations.
* Electric strimmer and battery to be maintained in good working order. Protective gear to be worn and Health and Safety guidelines to be followed.

**Website and social media**

Our website address is penneyswood.org.uk and access should be easy from any device. Information and photos advertise what Penney’s Community Woodland has to offer and show the range of activities that we do. New volunteers are also encouraged to join the group.

There is also a Penney’s Wood Instagram account and Facebook page. For specific projects, extra helpers, or sharing information locally, the Fossoway Forum Facebook page would probably be more effective. Perhaps links could be formed with other platforms. The Website is currently hosted privately. It should really be moved to a public provider and the name transferred. This would incur monthly or annual fees.

**Fundraising**

The main fundraising activity is the erection and dismantling of stalls for KLEO who run the Kinross Farmers’ Market. We normally do 2 per year, ideally with a team of 8, and earn £200 a time. In addition, our stall at the Fossoway Gathering brings in extra money from the sale of goods, usually baking and plants.

Actions:

* Continue to work for KLEO at Kinross Farmers’ Markets.
* Continue to have a stall at the Fossoway Gathering to publicise who we are, where we are and what we have to offer.

**Events**

Penney’s Community Woodland has hosted small picnics and BBQs and was the venue for large parties to celebrate The Queen’s Jubilee and The King’s Coronation, both of which were organised by an ad hoc local group. These occasions were hugely successful at providing opportunities for neighbours of all ages to relax and socialise in a unique outdoor environment.

Penney’s Wood takes a stall at the Fossoway Gathering to promote the woodland, find more volunteers to help and to raise additional funds. It is also important to be part of a bigger local community event and to encourage more people to explore what the woodland has to offer.

Actions:

* Continue to take a stall at the Fossoway Gathering.
* Consider hosting social events in the woodland, such as holding an Apple Day to juice our fruit.