

LOCHEND WOODS COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING (DUNBAR ENERGY RECOVERY FACILITY) DUNBAR, EAST LoTHIAN

Interserve Construction Ltd, Dunbar Community Woodlands

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

Project overview

Interserve is constructing the £177 million Dunbar Energy Recovery Facility for Viridor. The project is located on the outskirts of the small coastal town of Dunbar. Interserve has had a large presence in the town since starting construction in 2015, with many staff living in the town during the construction period. Although elements of the Dunbar ERF are covered by BREEAM, opportunities for ecological enhancement measures are limited within the project's site boundary. Interserve's Community Benefit Officer, Janet McLean, engaged the Dunbar Community Woodlands Group (a registered charity), who work voluntarily on behalf of the East Lothian community. Lochend Woods was given to the people of Dunbar in 2007. The 33 hectare woods are easily accessible from the town and are managed as conservation area and a community and educational resource.

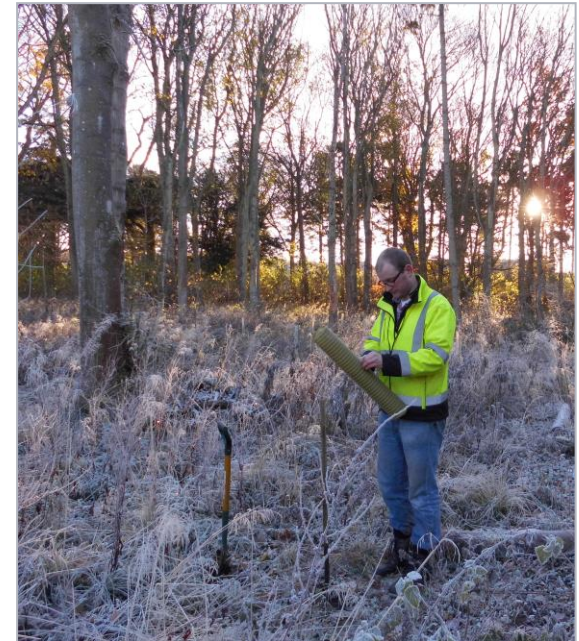
Pre-existing biodiversity conditions

Lochend Woods is a 33 hectare mature woodland, most recently replanted in the 1950s. Species include sycamore, ash, beech, elm, larch, pine and spruce.

The long-term Management Plan identifies the need for thinning and replacement of exotics with native species. The overall aims to balance biodiversity and community accessibility.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

Interserve operates an employee volunteering scheme called Give A Day Of Your Time through the Interserve Employee Foundation. The project's senior management team were keen to identify a suitable project that would benefit local residents and provide staff with a volunteering opportunity. Following a meeting with the Dunbar Community Woodlands chairman, undertaking improvement works at Lochend Woods was identified as a suitable volunteering project. There are no planning conditions or contractual requirements for community engagement on the Dunbar ERF project, just enthusiastic senior management that wanted us to take part in something that would benefit the local community.



Interserve Senior Engineer Sam Heritage-Owen planting saplings (Photo: Janet McLean)

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

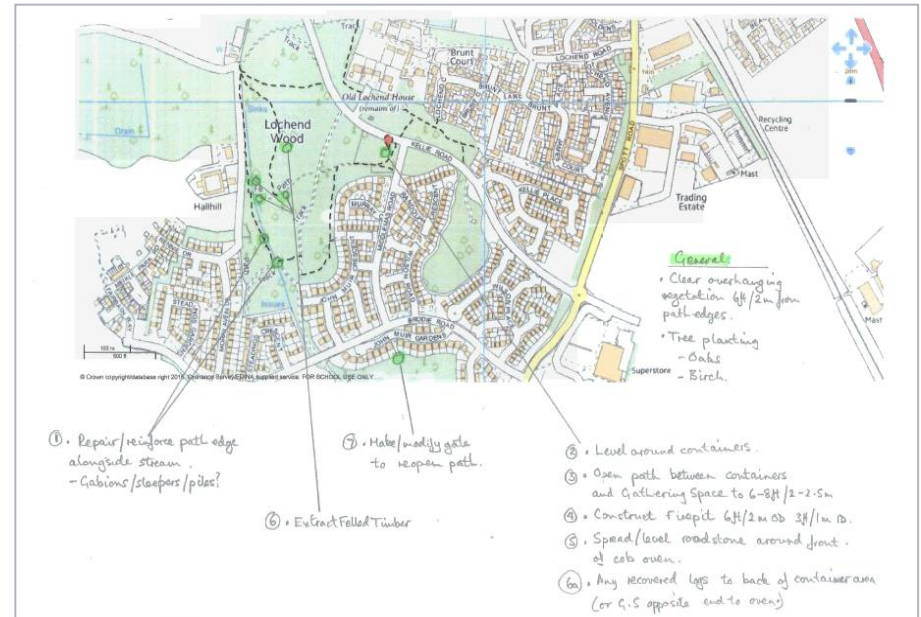
The project involved enhancements of Lochend Woods for both ecological and community benefit, 21-23 November 2016. These included:

- Levelling the ground at the entrance to the woods to enhance access
- Replacing walkway slabs
- Removing vegetation around the pathways
- Pruning overgrown trees & bushes that affected the footpaths
- Planting of 100+ new saplings (locally present native species, comprising mainly oak and birch)
- Weeding and removal of 'exotics'.
- Creation of a 'congregation' area around an existing wood stove
- Use of cuttings and green waste to form brush piles as habitat enhancements for small animals

The above tasks were specified by the Dunbar Community Woodlands Group as needing urgent completion due to a shortage of local volunteers over the winter period. The tasks would also help to make Lochend Woods ready for the forthcoming spring and planned visits from local school children.

The long term environmental benefits result from assisting in the implementation of the Management Plan, by removing weeds and non-native species, provision of brush piles and new suitable planting. Wider community benefits include improved accessibility of pathways and communal areas.

A total of 16 Interserve staff volunteered 22 days as part of the project. Interserve also provided free use of a mini excavator and driver.



Task and location plan for Lochend Woods Community Volunteering

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

“Dunbar Community Woodland Group is a small voluntary group who look after the management of Lochend Woods in Dunbar, East Lothian on behalf of the whole community. We currently have about 95 subscribing members and a much smaller number of active members. As such we have a very limited income stream, predominantly subscriptions, which we have to use for necessary tree surgery, materials and plant hire so any offers of help are always very welcome.

We were contacted by Janet McLean at Interserve, asking if we had any volunteering opportunities. Thus it was that a very enthusiastic group turned up on a frosty November morning and set to work with cold fingers and good humour to give something to the community in which they were working.

The benefits to woods include being able to carry out the work in a much shorter space of time than would otherwise have been the case. The trees were planted early which meant that they were in the best position to take advantage of the mild weather early this year.

The working party provided valuable manpower. We hope that they enjoyed themselves as much as we appreciate the work and effort they gave to us. This is an excellent scheme run by Interserve and we would be more than happy to have them back in the future.”

Nick Parker, Convenor, Dunbar Community Woodland Group



Interserve volunteers warming up after a morning's hard work. (Photo: Janet McLean)

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

“As an Interserve Employee Foundation Ambassador, I am always looking for ways to benefit our local communities. This project was a great way to do this as it serves the whole of the East Lothian community and you don't often get to be involved in something that has such a wide demographic benefit in one project.”

Janet McLean, Community Benefits Officer